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DISCOURSES

ON

THE JEWISH RELIGION.

BY

ISAAC LEESER.

הלוא כה דברי נאם ה׳ כאש וכפטיש יפוצץ סלע׃
ירמ׳ כג׳ כט׳׃

"BEHOLD! THUS IS MY WORD, SAITH THE LORD, LIKE THE FIRE,
AND LIKE THE HAMMER THAT SHIVERETH THE ROCK."
Jeremiah xxiii. 29.

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VOL. I.

FIRST SERIES.

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DEDICATION.

TO THE

RIGHT REVEREND ABRAHAM SUTRO,

Chief Rabbi of the Diocese of Münster and Mark.

HONOURED RABBI!

IN inscribing these volumes to you, I cannot refrain from publicly acknowledging that to you it is chiefly owing that I ever ventured to undertake the task of a public teacher. I well remember the time, when scarcely nine summers had passed over my head, that you arrived among us; and how the first sermon I ever heard delivered, the one you addressed to our congregation, made a powerful impression upon us all, not excepting the little unconscious boy I then was. You, also, as I advanced in life, encouraged my humble striving to excel, and I can never forget the kindness with which you always seconded the efforts of my blessed teacher. I trust that the fruits of maturer years, which I now present to you, may be thought worthy of your acceptance, and convince you that your guidance and instruction, as well as your example, have not been lost upon the one who is now far removed from the sphere of your pious labours.

May many blessings attend you; and let me hope that long life and extended usefulness may be granted you from above, in order to draw many more hearts into the service of our almighty Father, as you have done in the case of

Your devoted servant,
and obedient scholar,
ISAAC LEESER.

PHILADELPHIA,
Tebeth 29th, 5597.

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PREFACE TO THE STEREOTYPE EDITION.

It is now full thirty years since the first two volumes of my Sermons, under the title "Discourses, Argumentative and Devotional, on the Subject of the Jewish Religion," were laid before the public, and for many years past the small edition, consisting of five hundred copies only, has been exhausted, and the occasional demand for the work could not be supplied. Since the date of the first appearance of my public addresses the number of Israelites has increased immensely in this country, and a new generation has sprung up to whom I would gladly leave these volumes as my religious legacy; for such as they are, they contain the sincere outpouring of an honest heart, if I know myself at all; and therefore I hope that they will be useful to some, conscious that they cannot be injurious to any of our people. Since the first edition was issued many changes in our religious affairs have taken place among us; but in my own mind the old faith has not been supplanted by the new ideas which have found so many adherents and many advocates among men claiming superior learning. Notwithstanding the lapse of so many years, therefore, a few verbal corrections only have been deemed necessary, and not an idea has been altered to suit the more modern taste, convinced as I am that truth is unchangeable, and I hope that the heart of the vast majority of Israelites will still respond to the instructions laid before them now, as was the case three decennia ago, when I was perhaps the only Jewish public speaker in America.

Advancing years have admonished me not to delay issuing the remainder of my manuscript and to revise what I have printed already. It would be unpleasant to me to reflect that, when the grave incloses my mortal remains, some one might be induced to edit my writings with such arbitrary changes and annotations as he might fancy to introduce, and to make me say what I would not sanction, were it in my power to speak for myself. The approbation bestowed on my oral lectures and printed works leads me to hope that my labours will not be totally forgotten; and hence they are now presented to the new generation of Israelites, more numerous by far than that for which I first exerted myself, with all the correctness I am capable of, and in a style which it is hoped will secure the approval of the public, at least as far as concerns the mechanical execution.

These few observations are deemed all that is necessary to serve as an apology for appearing again before the public with my productions. For I have been so long indulged, by the forbearance of those who have with me the same faith and hope, in the efforts made to serve them in the profession to which their choice called me so very early in life, that I sincerely trust that now in the decline of years I shall be as kindly received, as when first the exigencies of the times and of our people induced me to wield my inexperienced pen in their service, and in that cause which has ever enjoyed the evident protection of the Most High.

PHILADELPHIA, Iyar 10th, 5627.

PREFACE.

In the following work the reader is presented with the labour of more than six years. Many of the Discourses were composed, when I suffered both under mental and bodily afflictions, when any exertion was extremely painful; and it must not be imagined, that, what appears to read smoothly, and as if written off-hand, did not cost me an intense degree of thought and application. Very often the labour was interrupted by severe sickness and other untoward events, and hence the frequent long intervals between the different treatises. Still I never relaxed in my endeavours to diffuse religious and useful knowledge, and I fervently trust that I have succeeded, to a certain extent, to impart some information which is not readily accessible in books in general circulation.

The first twenty Discourses were re-written; because I could not suffer my first attempts to come before the public without a careful revision. The others, however, which were composed chiefly after the chastening hand of the Lord had fallen heavily on me, were prepared with more care, and I therefore only corrected them thoroughly, and altered those parts which appeared objectionable or defective. I will not assert, that I could not have altered the whole series, and perhaps improved it much more than I have done; but still I was obliged to stop somewhere in the corrections I introduced, and I candidly believe that farther changes, curtailments and enlargements would not have enabled me to produce any thing more deserving of approbation; as, what might in this manner have been gained in beauty of style, would to a certainty have been at a sacrifice of the force and ingenuousness always belonging to the first efforts of the mind, before they have been subjected to the cold and capricious judgment of criticism. Doubtless another might have used the pruning-knife more frequently and relentlessly, and have improved the work much more than has been done by me; still I may say, that I acted as impartially towards myself as I was able, and excused nothing that I found to be faulty. Entire passages have thus been taken out, sentences altered, words substituted, and the arguments condensed, at times even after the matter was in type; which I was the more enabled to do, as I have been uniformly in the habit of laying my writings aside and never recurring to them till the lapse of considerable time, perhaps not till after several years. Hence, I had very often forgotten the whole of a discourse, and upon reading and preparing it for the press, it was almost as new to me as to an entire stranger. To this it is also owing, that in two instances, I believe, I chose the same text, and at times introduced parts of arguments and quotations which had been employed on prior occasions. I hope, however, that these faults (for such they certainly are) will not be thought of sufficient magnitude, nor of so frequent recurrence, as to offend the reader; at all events I am induced to think, that the like blemishes are almost inseparable from a labour of so many years, without a degree of care and fearfulness, which would materially injure the force and energy of a rapid flow of ideas.

The several sketches of character introduced, although I confess that many of them have been taken from actual observation and historical personages, will nevertheless, I hope, be found not to contain any thing offensive to any one; for though I would always condemn crime and impiety in language of becoming severity: I should be sorry to be deemed guilty of personalities, and of dragging the faults of the living or dead before the public gaze without a sufficient and cogent reason.

In place of giving out a text and stringing a sermon to the same, as is customary with most preachers, I have generally chosen to introduce it in the middle or even at the conclusion of my discourses; because I desired to illustrate a doctrinal point, and then show its consonance with the text of Scripture, believing this course less fatiguing and more interesting to the audience than the usual mode.

I laboured under the same disadvantage of not possessing many books of reference, as on former occasions, and I had to remedy it by a greater degree of care and more intense study.—The translations of passages from Scripture are mostly according to the opinions of our commentators, and I did not often consult the common English version; hence no doubt great difference in the wording from this Standard will often be met with.

As yet I have found no publisher for my works; and I have therefore to undertake both the literary and the mercantile part of the enterprise. The latter is particularly harassing to one who, like myself, has no business connexions, and has to rely upon persons otherwise engaged to dispose of the books, which is a task that but few are willing to engage in. I therefore return my sincere thanks to those who have endeavoured to assist me in my undertaking by inducing others to encourage it, and I only regret that their exertions have not met with a better return.—I hope, however, that they will not relax for the future, believing as I do, conscientiously, that in circulating the few works I have edited they aid in the dissemination of truth, as I have endeavoured to let nothing escape my pen which could be injurious in the least to the cause of morality and the public welfare.—In addition to the foregoing, I have to state, that if I had taken my former want of success as a warning, I should never have obtruded myself again upon the public; since the first work I issued brought no profit, and the second caused a considerable pecuniary loss.—Still the favourable opinion expressed of both by competent judges, and the kindness and encouraging language of sincere friends have counselled me to persevere, and I have but little doubt that the present effort will be more successful than the preceding ones, although the substantial manner and good style in which the mechanical part has been executed will prevent any considerable gain, even if the whole edition, which is but half of the "Instruction" and two-thirds of the "Jews and Mosaic Law," should be disposed of. Nevertheless, the increased number of subscribers is highly gratifying, as it abundantly proves, that neither myself nor my efforts have sunk in public estimation.—But I believe it is time to dismiss the subject, as otherwise some, too much disposed to criticize words and motives, might have some show of reason to suppose interested views of a sordid nature to be the cause of this publication. I do not lay claim to an exemption from human faults and frailties; but in justice to myself I maintain, without vanity or self-deception, that my whole course, both public and private, will bear me out in saying, that pecuniary gain has had but a small share in prompting my actions. More I need not say, as I am not yet accused, and if this should unfortunately be the case, then it will be time enough to reply.

I should like to tell the reader something more of the rise and progress of my public teaching; but the time I have already consumed in speaking of myself, personally, admonishes me to leave it for a future and more fitting occasion. Yet I must remark in passing, that the whole of the Discourses may be viewed as extemporaneous effusions in writing; since I never prepared them, with but very few exceptions, till a day or two before the day I spoke them; and in revising them for the press, I took especial care not to alter the subject-matter more than correctness of argument and of diction required.—I have done.—The book is before the public; and in asking an indulgent judgment, I wish not faults to be extenuated or defects to be passed over without censure.

Let me hope, that the exertions I have made in the service of my Maker may redound to diffuse the knowledge of his commandments among our people, and to contribute to cement stronger the bond that unites us in our captivity; and that my humble striving may be viewed in favour by Him who is the Lord and the Creator of the universe.

PHILADELPHIA, { Tebeth 29th, 5597.
January 6th, 1837.

DISCOURSES

ON THE

JEWISH RELIGION.

DISCOURSE I.*

CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

Brethren of the House of Israel!

It is with extreme reluctance, founded upon a knowledge of my inability to advance any thing which may be generally interesting, that I now, for the first time, venture to address you. I feel too little confidence in my attainments (and I hope that no one will accuse me of affectation for so saying) even to imagine, that I could do justice to our holy religion by any thing I am going to say. Before I begin, therefore, I am constrained to tell you, that only in obedience to the repeated solicitations of persons who really feel an interest in the welfare of our nation, I persuaded my-

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* It was in the early part of the summer of 5589, that I was invited to become a candidate for the office of Hazan of the congregation Mikve Israel of Philadelphia. I was at that time only a few months over twenty-two years old, and had not thought of ever becoming the minister of any congregation, and was induced solely under the persuasion that by being in public life I could become useful to the Jewish community, that I consented to have my name presented among others. At that period the duties of the minister were confined to the conducting of the public worship in the Synagogue and elsewhere, and it was not expected that he should be at the same time a preacher and exhorter. But even before my being in office it had appeared to me as an incongruity, that words of instruction formed no part of our regular service; and having been summoned on account of some literary efforts produced in Richmond to accept the trust with which the voice of a large majority of the

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Israelites of Philadelphia honoured me, I had indulged the hope that I would be requested, immediately after my election, to give discourses on our religion in the language of the country. But herein I was sadly disappointed. At several meetings of the congregation and of the Board of Managers nothing was said or done to authorize me even to assume the character of preacher, while the laws, as they stood, conferred on the presiding officer alone the power to direct the Hazan or any other person to deliver sermons on special occasions. But though I had no power bestowed on me to speak, it was perfectly clear that the people desired pulpit instruction. After being, therefore, nearly nine months in office, I was induced to address a circular letter to the several members of the Board of Adjunta, asking them whether my speaking in Synagogue would meet their consent. Without holding a formal meeting, a majority of the Board signified, in unofficial letters, their approval of my intention. With this permission thus conveyed, I had to be satisfied, and I accordingly prepared myself with the above address which was spoken on Sabbath Nasso, 5590, and was the first original composition I ever delivered in public. It was a painful experiment, the issue of which I greatly dreaded; but the kind approbation and encouragement bestowed on me by some intelligent ladies, especially, after it had been spoken, admonished me that I ought to persevere; and the result has been that while faithfully discharging all the duties proper of the Hazanship, I added public instruction as a part of our service. Since the year noted above, the custom has extended almost everywhere, and no congregation thinks itself thoroughly organized without a preacher; but then speaking in Synagogue was something new, and far from being acquiesced in by many even well-meaning and pious persons.

self to attempt teaching that, which I deem to be the essential parts of our faith. After this candid avowal, I trust, that you will pardon any defect which you may discover, and be a little indulgent to my first effort at public speaking. It is highly probable, that most of you, if not all, may have heard all which I can advance; but then I must beg of you to consider, that known truths may often be but faintly remembered, and that we may derive great and lasting benefits by having them presented to us in a light, in which perhaps we had never before viewed them. It is for this reason expedient, that occasional lectures on religious subjects should be delivered in our Synagogues, although I cannot deny that many members, perhaps the greater number, of our society are sufficiently acquainted with their duties, and need not to be reminded of them by any preacher, however eloquent.—Having premised thus much, let us proceed to the consideration of the following verse, from the xxvth chapter of Isaiah:

ואמר ביום ההוא הנה אלהינו זה קוינו לו ויושיענו
זה ה' קוינו לו נגילה ונשמחה בישועתו : ישע' כה' ט':

"And it will be said on that day: Behold this is our God in whom we have trusted, and he will save us; this is the Lord in whom we have trusted, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." Isaiah xxv. 9.

God is great and mighty—nothing is too great for his power to accomplish—nothing is hidden from his searching view. For if we look around us and behold the stupendous works of creation; when we see the regularity and order which reign in everything; and when we turn our view within ourselves, and consider the nature of the living soul which we feel to animate us: we must be convinced, that the One above is powerful beyond compare, and wise beyond all measure. And if we descend from a contemplation of the greatness of God, as displayed in his creation, and reflect with care and candour upon the individual fortune of every human being: we will discover, that his providence and goodness are no less displayed in the details of life, than his power and wisdom are shown in the structure of the universe.

Of this his superintending watchfulness over the individual happiness and lives of the children of man, Holy Writ furnishes us with many examples; for there we find narrated, how He manifested his power in saving and assisting those worthy of being called his servants, those, who placed their trust in Him, their God and Redeemer, when they found themselves surrounded by difficulties, against which no human foresight could have guarded, from which no earthly means could extricate them. We there have, also, examples which prove, that they who relied on their own strength, or asked for and employed the aid of men, were unsuccessful in their endeavours, whilst the weaker, relying upon their Father above, were prosperous. This should teach us that, if we wish to receive the protection of God, we ought first to deserve it by placing an undivided confidence in his providence, and should never hesitate to do what our religion demands of us for fear of suffering worldly loss and inconvenience; but we should consider that we never can ultimately lose if we are truly obedient to God; that in his service we never will be allowed to suffer more than we are able to bear. We may be met by difficulties in our pursuit of righteousness, but it is our duty to remain unshaken; we may have to suffer temporary loss, but we should not heed it. We may perchance, also, subject ourselves to the hatred of wicked men; but we ought not to suffer the fear of the creature to overcome us in the service of the Creator. It should be enough for us, that we are doing our duty; that we are obeying the will of our Father: and this consciousness will strengthen us to bear up against all worldly ills; for, animated by a true confidence in God, we must feel that He is mighty enough to repay us our losses, remunerate us for our toil, and protect us from any injury to which we may be exposed. If therefore we are truly impressed with the knowledge of the power and goodness of the Lord, we must be his willing servants, and practise that readily which we are taught by Him to call wise and good, independent of all considerations of personal gain or aggrandizement, unswayed by fear of loss or persecution.

But as it is undeniable that we Israelites have at present no national government; as our number is but small and unimportant when compared with the mass of mankind: the pursuit of our religion may appear unprofitable to many among the worldly-minded, since it can bring them no temporal advantages, for there are none in authority who may bestow on them offices of trust and profit for their attachment to the ancient faith; and the system which we uphold makes often strong demands upon our personal convenience and upon the riches we may possess. Perhaps the strict observance of our law may prevent us from participating in the distribution of certain offices, the duties of which may compel us to transgress the divine precepts. Again, some one may be induced to plead necessity as an excuse for not adhering very strictly to the religion of his forefathers; and he may imagine to himself a sufficient number of excuses to lull his conscience to sleep, whilst he transgresses the commandments of his God. Nevertheless he will assert, that he is a good and truly religious man, since he observes what is commonly called the moral duties; and he alleges that he fulfils everything which God can in reason ask of him; but he forgets in his self-gratulation, that interest alone, sordid meanness, groveling avarice, and a yielding to selfish desires are the true motives of his conduct. And can this be religion? is this a display of pure faith? an entire reliance on God's omnipotence? No! Let me tell him that he has not true religion in his heart—that his soul has not the proper reverence of the Lord—that his confidence is not entire in the God who created him. And although it is natural that we should be startled at the sight of what are called necessities, and although we are very apt to view every obstacle as insurmountable, provided we can excuse ourselves thereby for not doing our duty: we cannot call ourselves good and religious, we cannot be said to confide in God, as long as we are deterred from obeying Him by the dread of any evil we may have to suffer here, and withheld from engaging in his service by the sight of the difficulties which we have to encounter; for we are not then kindled by that devotion to the will of the Lord which will enable us to make personal sacrifices, and to submit to dangers in our endeavours to serve Him.

But, brethren, if interested motives tend so powerfully to weaken our confidence in God, there is yet another feeling, which may aptly be called *self-sufficiency*, against which we must arm ourselves by every means of which we are masters, if we wish to lead a religious life. For there are many, who, inflated by success in their pursuits, are misled to esteem their strength as sufficient to enable them to combat every obstacle—to shield themselves against all vicissitudes—to break down all the barriers which may oppose their success; and, therefore, rendered selfish and proud, they neglect to pay due deference to religious duties, and they seem to say by their conduct: "We need not confide in a providential assistance, we desire not any protection and succour from God. Are not our riches great? has not success uniformly attended our enterprises? and besides, were we punished when we disobeyed what the weaker and less enlightened part of mankind calls the divine laws?" But be silent, presumptuous sinners! what are ye at best but men—weak, powerless, short-sighted mortals. Do but look at yourselves, all you who think so much of your own capacities; look at your beginning—what you were once—what you are now—and what will you be: and then boast, if you dare, of the strength of man! When you were born, you were too weak to take care of yourselves, and as helpless children you required the nursing hand of your parents. You then learned to walk; you were taught to lisp the names of father and mother; and how glad were those that watched over your infancy at the first dawning of infantile strength and infantile intellect; and speak, could you then think of accomplishing those great designs which you now purpose? You next grew up apace—your minds were by degrees stored with knowledge; you were taught to reverence the name of God, and cheerfully you obeyed the mandates of your loving guardians; for your hearts were yet pure, and your innocence was not yet tainted by unholy passions; and the days of your youth were rich with all the pleasures, which that delightful age alone can bestow; but say, did you then nourish those views of ambition which now bend your spirits, which now make you the slaves of inordinate desires?—You reach the age of manhood, and you aim to grasp at every thing; nay, the world seems hardly large enough to afford you room for the exercise of your enterprise; but see you not often your best plans frustrated?—see you not often your strength fail, when you think you need but to stretch forth your hand to seize the long sought for prize?—And do behold yon infirm old man; he is one that has seen pleasure—has enjoyed riches—was beloved by his family—respected and reverenced by all who knew him—persons approached him with awe as though he were a superior being;—but look at him now, how he totters along, his feet will barely carry him from the spot on which he happens to stand;—look at his dress, it is worn to rags;—look at his sunken eye bedimmed with sorrow: and then tell me, what is human greatness, what is human glory! Only few days are yet the portion of this stricken old man, and soon he must go down to the chill, dark grave, and appear before the Supreme Judge of the universe, "where the poor and the rich are alike, and where the slave is free from his master."

This is human life—its origin, its fulness, and its close. What then hast thou mortal to boast of? Surely not riches, not worldly goods, which when obtained are fleeting, and soon lost, though obtained with great labour; but only the soul within thee, which feels, which thinks, which prompts thee to action—this is thy riches, thy portion, thy imperishable inheritance from thy God. And can she feel aught of delight at thy hoarded riches? can she feel pleasure because thou dwellest in a palace? can she be benefitted, when thou hast hundreds of menials that are ready at thy nod? No, thou mistakest the truth; she feels no pleasure on account of thy wealth; she is only delighted when thou art good and virtuous, when thy confidence in God enables thee to be above mean desire and sordid avarice, and when thou art man enough to defy every obstacle which may oppose thee in the acquisition of virtue. For when our mortal career is closed, when the soul ascends to God, she needs no longer the blessings which this life can afford; and nothing but virtue and piety remain to her then from her sojournment on earth.

Our wise men illustrated this by the following parable: A certain man had three friends, to one of whom he was devotedly attached; to the second he was kind, but he did not esteem him by far as much as the first; to the third, however, he paid but little regard, and scarcely ever thought of him. It happened one day, that this man was suddenly summoned before the king; and not knowing the cause of the unexpected summons, or perhaps dreading to appear before the king without a powerful defender to assist him in case of necessity: he applied to the first of his friends, being sure, that he would not refuse him his countenance in the present emergency. The friend, however, did refuse, excusing himself, saying: "I really cannot go; I am so much occupied with my own concerns, that it is impossible for me to assist you now; besides this, I have no influence with the king." He then went to the second, who answered: "I can do but little for you; but as we have been friends so long, I will accompany you as far as the palace-gate, more than this I cannot do."—Finding himself so rudely treated by his most intimate friends, he applied to the last, whom he had so long neglected. This one, who in fact had always loved him more than either of the others, received him with open arms, saying: "How glad I am, my dear friend, that you have given me this opportunity of serving you; I will go with you to the king, I will remain with you, and defend you if necessary."

The moral of the foregoing is, that a man generally values his riches more than his relatives and friends, and these again more than his religion, which is, alas! like the last friend in the parable, too often neglected and almost forgotten. He is finally summoned to appear before the King of kings, the Holy One, praised be He; his money avails him nothing,—this must be left behind; his relatives and friends accompany him to the grave, there *they* must leave him; and thus his virtues and good deeds alone remain with him, to go with him to the tribunal of the Judge of all to defend him and to plead in his favour.—Why then should we turn our whole attention to the acquisition of wealth,—why should we be so sedulous to make friends—when these riches, and these friends, are eventually of so little real benefit to us? In saying this, I must not be misunderstood as inculcating, that it is wrong to endeavour to become rich, or to acquire friends; for my intention only is to impress your minds with the folly of continually searching for wealth, of that anxious solicitude to have a large number of admirers, and thereby neglecting the more necessary duties, which are, the perfecting of yourselves in the fear of the Lord and the love towards man. In a word, the possession of riches should be the secondary object, the possession of virtue however the chief, as it is the true, aim of life.

It may indeed happen, that persons less religious, less moral, less beloved, than yourselves may possess a larger portion of worldly blessings; but can this be an excuse for you to follow their example? Do you not know: "That only a short time elapses, and the wicked is gone, and you search his place carefully, and he is no more?"—Perhaps you may never live to see the punishment of the man, whom you think yourselves justified in calling wicked; but reflect, that it is not for you to determine, who is guilty, or who is innocent; there is one Judge, who searches the heart, He knows the true desires of each man's spirit; and many a one, whom you think very bad, may have hidden virtues, and many an outwardly pious man may be actuated by wicked motives. It is in fact the perfection of our confidence in God, that we never find fault with his dispensations, and that we always cheerfully acquiesce in his decisions, be they for us or against us. Even if we should be conscious, that we have done nothing to deserve misfortune, (yet where is that man who never sinneth?) we ought, nevertheless, to submit patiently to the dispensation of Heaven, and resign ourselves to his decree, since it is perhaps the rod held over us, which prevents us from following in the paths of sinners. For it may be known to Infinite Wisdom, that prosperity would make us forgetful of his will, that elated with success we might ascribe this success to our own strength, and forget, "that it is He alone who enables us to acquire wealth." And is it not better then for our everlasting happiness, that we remain, whilst in this world, in humble circumstances? Every one of you can answer this question for himself; for it needs not my admonition to convince you, that *eternity* ought to be more regarded than *evanescent time.*

If, therefore, we should be overtaken by misfortunes, if we even see our fondest hopes blighted, if those we love most are torn from our embrace in the prime of youthful life: we should reflect, that He who has smitten us, can also apply the healing balsam to the wound, and that He never punishes a man beyond his strength of enduring. And if we are destined to suffer much, we shall have an equal share of firmness to suffer with patience and resignation; and thus must the evil even tend to fortify us more strongly in the fear of God, and in the confidence we should feel in Him; and unhappiness, therefore, which lasts but a short time, may be the cause of permanent happiness and undying bliss.

If thus an individual is to feel an unwavering, filial, confidence in his Creator, it becomes no less obligatory upon Jews, as a nation, to trust unshrinkingly, without murmuring, without searching in the decrees of his unsearchable wisdom, in the God of our fathers, who has sustained us through so many ages of persecution and oppression. For if we ask: "Why are we to suffer so much more than any other people?" we should answer ourselves, that we are punished for our manifold transgressions; for our having broken the covenant which the Lord made with us; for our having been disunited among ourselves, and for being even at this very moment still unworthy of the great and glorious happiness promised to us through the mouth of nearly all the prophets. It therefore came to pass, that, as the prophet says: "God was *as* an enemy towards us;" He punished us severely, as though He were an enemy, as though He despised Israel, but in reality only to make us feel the great burden of our sins, to awaken us to a consideration of our fallen moral state, and to induce us thereby to mend our ways, and to return to Him, the Lord, whom we have forsaken. The refiner melts not the gold to destroy it, but to purify it from the admixture of impure matter. Just so is the long captivity of the Israelites to be regarded—as a process by which the Eternal One endeavours to purify us from sin; to restore us at the last to our land cleansed from our transgressions; and to cause our virtue to shine with a tenfold greater lustre, than it ever has done, since we received the law from Sinai. We ought, therefore, to confide truly in God, and always look forward with an unshaken and undiminished hope to our restoration to the land of Israel, and to abide faithful to the covenant which God made with our ancestors, undeterred by the hatred and persecution of the gentiles. And if we have always done this, in our state of dispersion, we may then say, "on that day (when God has restored us): Behold this is our God in whom we have trusted, and He will save us; this is the Lord in whom we have trusted, and we will be glad and rejoiced through his salvation."

May the Lord then have mercy on us all, and bring back the captives of his people, who confide in Him and await his salvation. May He bless us all and preserve us; may He let his countenance shine unto us, and be gracious to us; may He lift up his countenance unto us and grant us peace, at this time, and give us everlasting rest from all oppression, and security from war and desolation in our own land at the coming of his anointed one, the son of David! Amen.

Sivan 10th. } 5590.
June 2d.

DISCOURSE II.

WANT OF FAITH.

Creator of all! Thou, whose glory fills the world, we adore Thee and confide in Thee, because of thy goodness. We humbly approach thy sanctuary and ask thy protection. O grant us prosperity, and relieve us from all affliction; and if we even be not worthy of thy bounties, do Thou show us thy mercies for the sake of thy holy name, by which we are called. Amen.

Brethren!

When I addressed you last, I endeavoured to point out the necessity of confiding in God in all our transactions. If we now come to examine the nature of this confiding more closely, it will become evident, that this virtue is the parent of all other virtues, whereas the want of it will expose us to the commission of all kinds of sin. The man, who truly confides in God, will need no other incentive to the practice of religious duties; for he will say on every occasion: "It is my God who demands the observance of this duty from me, it is my Creator who forbids the perpetration of this act; and as He asks nothing which is beyond my strength to accomplish, and as He desires my happiness only: common feelings of gratitude compel me to obey his precepts." But what can the wavering man oppose to his passions? He loves not his Maker;—his God is to him as an unknown stranger, and the precepts of the law, if observed at all, are viewed as a task, a burden almost too heavy to be borne. An opportunity of sinning is offered to him, his passions are roused, the fear of God raises but a feeble voice of warning within his bosom: and he falls—yes, falls deeper, than he had any reason even to expect in the first instance of his yielding to his inclinations. For the path of virtue is a slippery ascent, the summit of which can be reached only by unremitted toiling and untiring vigilance; but wo to us, if we confide not strongly in Him, who calls encouragingly down to us from the highest point of elevation, to despise danger and ascend fearlessly; for if his voice remains unheeded, and we give way to our natural apprehensions, we lose our footing and glide down unawares, and if we cannot catch at an impending bough or a prominent crag in our descent, we must reach, alas, too soon! the very bottom of the hill, and thus (to drop the metaphor) instead of being virtuous, as we had intended to be, we become depraved sinners—solely, because we were too indolent, too confiding in our own abilities, to overcome the desires of a passion, or the impulse of some unhallowed feeling, when it was yet time to save us, when a slight exertion of confidence in the divine guidance might yet have shielded us against all attacks of selfishness, of avarice, and of pride.

And how often have we not all been the sorrowful witnesses of the fatal effects of such a want of faith, as just described? Many there were, who in the outset of their irreligious career transgressed but in some small, immaterial, as they thought, ceremonial duty, they sipped, as it were, but slightly of the poisonous bowl; but point by point the duties of revelation were all neglected, till the sinners themselves were astonished at the distance which separated them from their God. Perhaps the first step was the partaking of the food which the law forbids to the sons of Israel; then the holy day of the Lord was neglected; anon a daughter of the stranger was chosen the companion of a descendant of Abraham, and an abjuration of the religion promulgated by Moses completed at length the circle of transgressions against the will of our Maker. And all this was caused, by the want of a singleness of faith, by the absence of an entire filial reliance on the goodness and truth of God; for if a man does truly confide and believe, he will have a great protection against sin, and if he in an evil hour should transgress, he will hasten with contrition and sorrow to seek the forgiveness of the Omniscient One for the wrong he has done, and endeavour to deserve pardon and mercy by a more careful regard to the duties incumbent on him. But where faith is wanting, where confidence does not dwell triumphant in the soul, the passions can reign unrestrained; and when sin has once got a hold of such a heart, the course of apostacy will be pursued, perhaps, to destruction; and it often happens that so strong are the bonds of wickedness, so powerful the charms of ungodliness, that the sinner perishes without atoning for his misdeeds, without an endeavour to appease the Creator, whose holy spirit he has vexed by his iniquity.

This is the fruit of want of confidence in individuals; but nations also may be exposed to the same cause of sin, and whole communities may be lost by not guarding themselves carefully against the attacks of pusillanimousness on the one side, and pride and arrogance on the other. A most striking example, one which is no doubt familiar to you all, is given to us in the portion of the Law, which we read this morning.—The Israelites had been redeemed from Egypt in a miraculous manner, and had received the law from Sinai, as a guide for them in all the transactions of life. They had also been promised, that they should inherit the land of Canaan, now known as Palestine. They were on their journey to this delightful country, under the guidance of the great Moses, who had been the instrument in the hand of God of effecting their deliverance. They ought, therefore, to have had confidence enough in the Power, who had protected them thus far, to advance boldly, without regarding any impediment which might oppose them. But no, they required that spies should be sent out, who were to report to them the nature of the country, so that they might be enabled "to know the road they were to go, and the cities they should come to." (Deut. i. 22.) Now mark the consequence. If the Israelites had firmly relied on God's assistance, and had fearlessly advanced to the conquest of the holy land, the very persons, who had been redeemed from Egyptian bondage, would also have been permitted to enjoy in Palestine all the comforts which freemen have in their own land. But owing to their fear of what might occur to them in their expedition, they demanded having some previous knowledge of the country. But as this desire was not absolutely sinful, since we should at all times apply natural means to obtain natural ends, and as spies are always employed to obtain all the information of localities and peculiar features of a country to be invaded which can be useful to the invaders: Moses received the sanction of God to send twelve men, one from each tribe, who should be chiefs in their own divisions. To these Moses gave particular directions, and requested them to be very circumstantial in their report. After spending forty days in the survey of Palestine, they returned to the assembled congregation, and ten out of the twelve magnified existing dangers, and invented others which existed only in their imagination. This was enough for the wavering multitude. They had now, as they thought, sufficient foundation for their previously entertained fears; they rose in tumult against the messenger of God, and complained bitterly of their fate, in being destined, together with their wives and children, to fall by the sword of the enemy, and they even discussed the propriety of appointing a chief, who should lead them back to Egypt, where they had been held as slaves, cruelly beaten, and their children murdered. All gratitude to Moses, all trust in the magnanimous chief, were suddenly dissipated, and they painted him in their fancy as an artful deceiver, who had only freed them from one danger, to make them perish by the sword of the lawless freebooters of the desert, and the fierce population of a well-fortified country. This, indeed, was rebellion against the Almighty, when men, who had so largely partaken of his bounty, could think of rejecting the leaders whom He had appointed for them, and talk of returning to the land of a tyrant, from whose grasp his almighty power had but so lately saved them. Moses and his faithful brother were sorely grieved,—they felt their inability of stemming the powerful opposition,—they were shocked at the folly and wickedness of a people for whom they had done so much already, and were willing to do even more; and they fell upon their face before the whole congregation, imagining perhaps, that these might be restored to a proper mode of thinking, at seeing their formerly trusted leaders prostrate before them in the dust. But although the multitude had thus shown how little faith was in them, there were still remaining two fearless men, who never had for a moment lost their firm conviction of the power of the Lord and their confidence in his providence.

These were the renowned champions of our nation, Joshua and Caleb, who with their garments rent, in order to prove how deeply they mourned for the unfortunate and wicked crowd, stepped forward from amidst the uproar and confusion, endeavouring to appease the tumult and rebellion, and thus they spoke (Numb. xiv. 7–9):

הארץ אשר עברנו בה לתור אתה טובה הארץ
מאד מאד : אם חפץ בנו ה' והביא אתנו אל הארץ
הזאת ונתנה לנו ארץ אשר הוא זבת חלב ודבש : אך
בה' אל תמרדו ואתם אל תיראו את עם הארץ כי
לחמנו הם סר צלם מעליהם וה' אתנו אל תיראם :
במד' יד' ז' :

"The land through which we have passed, to survey it, this land is very good. If the Lord is pleased with us, He will bring us into this land, and give it to us, a land, which overfloweth with milk and honey. Only act not rebelliously against the Lord, and then you need not fear the people of the land, for they are our bread (*i. e.*, we can easily overcome them); their shadow (God's protection) hath departed from them, whilst the Lord is with us; be you therefore not afraid of them."

You will observe, brethren, that in this address Joshua and Caleb wished to upbraid the people for their want of confidence in God. They, therefore, placed the land which they had visited in a prominent light before them, and painted it as a country which they ought to desire to possess, as a gift worthy to be conferred by Almighty God on his people. They then continued by observing, that this great prize might readily be obtained, if they would but deserve his favour, by obeying his will; for in this case, he would surrender the powerful and armed inhabitants into their hands, although they were as yet unused to war. But they, who had acted rebelliously towards God, and ungratefully towards his chosen messenger, would not listen to the wholesome admonitions of these two pious men, nay—they even threatened, in their rage, to sacrifice them to their resentment. But, see! the glory of God was suddenly revealed to the sinful and sinless ones, and the arms of the rebels were paralyzed, whilst the firm adherents of God were inspired with new confidence. Many times before this, the descent of the divine revelation had been a sign of redemption and grace to the Israelites; but now, on the contrary, the spirit of prophecy was revealed to Moses to announce the impending doom and suffering of the hitherto beloved people of God. The judgment indeed was severe; but their offence had also been great, and their desire to add murder to rebellion called loudly for vengeance. And thus spoke the Most High to Moses:

"How long will this people incense me, and how long will they not believe in me, despite of all the wonders which I have done in the midst of them. I will smite them with a pestilence and extirpate them, and make thee (Moses) a people greater and mightier than they are."—

We find here that God spoke, as though He wished to exterminate the whole race of Israelites for their want of reliance upon his protection, because of their unbelief.—Let us pause here, and view the good leader, (who had been selected from the whole nation as their mediator with God,) standing before the Almighty, and praying for the ungrateful people, who had but just attempted to slay those who had remained friendly to him. He recounted the miracles which God had displayed amongst Israel, and continued: "And now, I pray thee, to let thy great power be displayed, O Lord! as Thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord withholdeth his anger long, is full of kindness, pardoneth sin and transgression, but suffereth nothing to go unpunished; who visiteth the sin of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and the fourth generation. O pardon Thou the sin of this people, according to thy great kindness, and as Thou hast also been indulgent to this people from Egypt to this place." Moses, as will be seen, expressed in this prayer his wish, that the punishment of Israel might be averted, that they might live and reform their ways, so as again to deserve a renewal of God's favour. And great, indeed, is the goodness of God, and infinite are his mercies! and He answered: סלחתי כדברך "I pardon according to thy word." In this emphatic expression of Holy Writ—more beautiful by far than tongue can express—was announced the salvation of the Israelitish people, and the decree of their extermination revoked; and those only, who had at that time reached the age of twenty years, and who had all been guilty of rebellion, were doomed to perish in the wilderness, that they might experience the dreadful consequences, which must ensue when God withdraws his favour from man. For forty years they thus wandered about in the trackless wilderness, and by degrees all perished against whom the decree had gone forth. But even from this generation the manifest providence of God was not withheld. Food was provided for them in plenty, their garments did not wear off from their bodies, nor their sandals from their feet, and in the most barren soil, water was always ready for them to refresh their parched lips, when they were almost sinking beneath the scorching heat of a cloudless sun. Thus they performed their pilgrimage from station to station, under the *doom* and under the *protection* of Heaven; their children grew up to manhood, and the matrons of Yeshurun saw a new race springing up around them, a race, pure from foreign admixture—reared under the wise counsel and wholesome instruction of the father of the prophets—and destined by the will of the All-seeing One to inherit that land, which their fathers had forfeited by their repeated acts of rebellion.

In the foregoing remarks, I have endeavoured to sketch, in a few words, an imperfect picture of a part of the history of our people; an elaborate exhibition thereof would be needless, since the words of Scripture, the portion, namely, which we have read to-day, are so sublime, that nothing is left to be added to an account so perfect in every respect. It only therefore remains for me to draw your attention to the cause of this defection and this punishment. Many, no doubt, among you, will pass unqualified censure upon the conduct of our ancestors; they will probably imagine, that they would not have acted so under any circumstances. Now it is perfectly correct, that you should heartily condemn that which met the disapprobation and chastisement of our heavenly Father; but do not therefore, triumphing in the consciousness of your innocence, look back with contempt upon your misguided forefathers. Let rather the example of their sin be a warning to you all, an example, recorded by the inspired historian, to teach you a useful lesson of morality; and it is your duty to reflect carefully upon the causes which proved their ruin, that you may endeavour to escape the snare which produced their fall. Our ancestors transgressed, because they had no firm faith in God; and so may every one of us sin, if he does not carefully guard himself by faith and confidence in the Supreme, at the very outset of life. For only in case we commence our career with the pious resolution of being religious, only if we on every occasion place the sincerest confidence in the goodness of our Father, have we some reason to hope that we may, like Joshua and Caleb, remain firm and true to the cause of religion, even when all around us swerve from the way of righteousness; and only by a meek resignation to God's decrees, free from any overweening pride, which would prompt us to display our piety to the world in order to show how much better we are than others, can we hope to be rewarded with the peculiar favour of God, as were these two pious men, whose history we have read in this day's portion.—But if, on the other hand, we commence in early youth a life of dissipation, pushing the admonitions of conscience with both hands, as it were, from us; if the laxity of our religious hope does not enable us then to resist temptations, and to disregard the slight obstacles which every now and then must oppose themselves to our religious improvement: how can we expect to perform well our part during a long course of life, where we may have to encounter opposition not yet thought of even?—Let me therefore admonish you, my brethren, to watch over yourselves with a careful eye, even at the outset of life; to excuse none of your faults and follies to yourselves; but to let it be your constant endeavour to trace every one of your actions to the secret source whence it springs; to look always upon the Deity as your support in all difficulties, and to his presence as your destined home.—If you do this, you may fearlessly enter life with a joyous heart; your travelling upon the road of earthly existence will then bring you nearer, step by step, to the desired summit; and the little obstacles you may meet with on the way, the slight shocks you may receive whilst pursuing your journey, will make you more circumspect, and render your next step always surer. Thus you will live as pious men—thus you, daughters of Zion, will be the joy of your fathers, the delight of your husbands, and a blessing to your children;—and thus may we all, after a well-spent life, hope to enter the presence of our God in purity and innocence, there to enjoy the delights at his right hand forever. Amen.

Sivan 25th. } 5590.
June 16th.

DISCOURSE III.

PIOUS ENERGY.

To the Almighty Father, who made his covenant with Abraham, renewed his oath to Isaac, and confirmed his promise to Jacob, and who chose our ancestors to be his people, be praise and glory for everlasting. Amen.

Brethren!

In all things which a man undertakes, a certain degree of activity, promptness, and decision is necessary, without which the best laid plans must be unsuccessful. The merchant thus in the pursuit of his business, always endeavours to secure to himself the earliest custom, and is ever apprehensive, lest another should forestall him in a certain transaction, or altogether prevent him from participating therein.—The mechanic tries to finish his wares in due time, that he may be enabled to meet the expected demand as early as any other of his craft, and in order to draw upon himself a great share of public attention, he strives to improve upon former models, and invent new and useful things.—The man of learning, in his endeavours to push himself forward, employs all his energy to claim a share of public patronage, and is always solicitous that no one shall despoil him of the honours, which he conceives to be his due.—The soldier, who is entrusted with the command of an army, is ever on the alert to discover where and when he can strike a decisive blow; and he would think himself highly blameworthy, were he to suffer himself to be anticipated, or to be taken by surprise by the enemy. All the classes of men just enumerated, and all others engaged in various other pursuits, think themselves bound to aim at being successful in their respective stations, and they accordingly regard not any labour as too great, nor any exertion as too troublesome, which may promote their several objects.—We thus see, that in all concerns of life, where worldly success is the goal, and the distinction for riches, skill, fame, and bravery the stake, the desired end will stimulate man to do all he can to deserve and insure a fortunate consummation.

But if we take a calm view of all earthly blessings, of whatever may be apportioned to us here, we must inevitably be struck with their uncertainty of duration and the small share of real enjoyment they can afford, even if possessed in their fullest extent. If then the acquisition of *these* demands so much perseverance and application, how much more should we exert our energies in searching for those things, the possession of which is permanent, and which afford us imperishable enjoyment? I allude, .as you no doubt are already aware, to the acquisition of pious feelings and the practice of virtuous deeds; since these are they, which confer upon us, in whatever part of the world, in whatever state of life we may be, the most lasting and unalloyed enjoyment; for piety will solace the mind even in affliction, and the consciousness of having done our duty, and of having accumulated a stock of virtuous deeds, will at all times give us a sincere pleasure—a pleasure unmixed by regret or compunctions of conscience. But to acquire virtue we must also make great exertions; for if we remain inactive in this pursuit, if we are careless of what means we employ, or fearful of outward circumstances, we can never become virtuous; for know! that unless we strain every nerve to conquer our sinful propensities, we can never hope of being ultimately that, for which the Lord of all has destined us. Because there is so much to distract our attention, so many circumstances calculated to lead us, if I may use the expression, into the by-paths of religion, that a constant vigilance, and withal an anxious and oft-repeated examination of ourselves become absolutely necessary to preserve us pure while we are yet innocent, or to restore us to the love of our God, if we have once strayed from the road which He has marked out to us as the way of everlasting life and happiness. But if we allow ourselves to be called away by outward circumstances, be they those of fancied necessity or inviting pleasure, if we, only for a brief space of time, actually cease to watch our desires and to combat our passions: we must sin from mere thoughtlessness, and we may thus become gradually depraved and be led into the depth of wickedness, without even heeding that we are treading the path of death.

But independently of carelessness, there is another fruitful cause of transgression—the idle fear of ridicule, which is apt to exercise, alas! a very baneful influence over the opinions of many, who are not yet initiated in vice, nor firmly established in piety. There is a considerable number of men, even among those endowed with a high degree of intellect, who are always afraid of incurring the ridicule of those they are placed amongst, and they will accordingly omit doing many things for fear of this derision of their associates. This is chiefly the case with young persons that associate with those of their own age, who are heedless and extravagant, and, as they call it themselves, gay and cheerful. Yet this gayety and this cheerfulness are not of that harmless kind which is the offspring of conscious innocence, but consist of a certain indulgence in dissipation and an occasional deviation from religious duties, which these gay young people often permit themselves under the excuse: "It is time enough to grow more serious when we grow older." A timid person coming in contact with such society is very apt to be withheld from pursuing the virtuous bent of his own inclinations, and is often induced to take part in their dissipation solely from fear of being called by them a dull fellow, or an unsociable being; and, therefore, the want of *moral* courage may be the cause of his becoming every hour more withdrawn from the path of righteousness, and of being numbered at the last amongst the dissolute and worthless, whose only aim is to live for the gratification of their passions, and who pride themselves at not being checked in their downward course by those little restraints which the religious part of mankind willingly impose upon their desires.—Having premised thus much, let us next proceed to the consideration of the following, from the fifth chapter of the Proverbs of the Fathers:

יהודה בן תימא אומר ' הוי עז כנמר ' וקל כנשר '
ורץ כצבי ' וגבור כארי ' לעשות רצון אביך שבשמים׃
אבות ה' כג'׃

"Yehudah son of Thaymah said: Be as bold as the tiger, fleet as the eagle, swift as the deer, and strong as the lion, to do the will of thy Father that is in heaven."

To explain the intent of this sage advice, let us investigate briefly the causes which withhold many persons from the practice of virtue. Some are *afraid* to act according to their own conviction; they fancy that they will expose themselves to the hatred of their powerful irreligious neighbours; or they expect to derive a benefit from some one, if they agree with him in outward conformity to certain rites and ceremonies; or, as said already, they fear to encounter the ridicule of the thoughtless; and from one or all of these circumstances combined they practise the evil, not perhaps from any love of sin itself, but from mere faintheartedness or motives of interest, their moral courage not being strong enough to enable them to combat the misgivings of fear, or the cravings of worldly gain. To men like these the moralist says: "Be as bold as the tiger to do the will of thy Father in heaven!" Regard not the hatred of the powerful, despise the sneers of the godless, turn a deaf ear to the inducement which strangers to God's worship and seducers may hold out, and defy all boldly, as the tiger defies the attacks of all other animals, and only obey the will of your Father that is in heaven. Let his fear always be upon you; and reflect that his power is greater by far than that of the most powerful man. Why then should you fear mortals more? Consider that He takes no frivolous excuses as a justification of your follies. Why then should the laughter of foolish sinners withdraw you from this service? Know also, that this bounty and beneficence are as unlimited as his power. Why then should hopes of gain or the expectation of being actually paid for apostacy, be any inducement to you to neglect your duties, and prevent you from following the divine precepts, which were given to promote your own happiness?

There is another class of men whose delight is to see every thing, and whose curiosity prompts them to investigate every transaction of life, and to study every kind of society: they think it will improve them, and give them a knowledge of character, and an insight into the motives and doings of men. And really it must be confessed, that such a curiosity, when properly exercised, must give us a knowledge of human nature both necessary and agreeable, which can hardly be obtained in any other way than by actual personal observation. Still if it be not properly controlled, it has also a great disadvantage, as it is apt to make us familiar with vice; for if we are indiscriminately curious, we may be led to seek *bad* society, in order to understand *that* also thoroughly, and to know whatever is committed there. But it must be remembered that, if we enter the company of the wicked, and repeat our visits often, we are very apt to lose the horror we at first felt for the follies we see practised there: we become, as it were, enamoured of what we once so thoroughly detested, and we fall by degrees into the pit, which we approached merely from idle curiosity, and which we might have easily avoided, if we had but kept in the right way, regardless of its existence. Again, some belonging to this class make a trial of vice from mere curiosity, imagining, that it will be easy for them to leave off whenever they may feel inclined; but they forget that vice lays hold of a man's mind, blinds his understanding and warps his judgment, and that it does require the greatest exertions to throw off evil habits when once acquired; and they do not reflect, that evil habits are soon contracted, and that one transgression is generally the forerunner of another. Some also think that they may safely skim lightly over the surface of sin; that they may with impunity be guilty of the lesser moral offences; but they are like those that play carelessly at the edge of some frightful precipice, heedless of danger, yet suddenly their head becomes giddy, their sight fails, and they fall unresistingly almost into the jaws of destruction. This precisely is the case of those, who think themselves secure in the habitual commission of some small errors, and believe themselves not guilty of any crime by so doing; but suddenly, perhaps unconsciously to themselves, they may plunge into real vice, when nothing can save them but a speedy repentance, which, however distasteful to their self-love, must be vigorously pursued, if they at all desire to recover their lost innocence. Rabbi Yehudah therefore advises all men: "Be as fleet as the eagle to do the will of thy Father in heaven!" meaning, be particularly watchful over your conduct, direct an eagle's gaze upon all your doings and the conduct of those around you; and be as fleet to escape from every vice, as the eagle is to escape from the arrow of the bowman, who threatens to take his life; and rest not in your upward career, till you have reached an elevation whence you can look down with the utmost safety upon all on earth, which then will appear little and unimportant at the immeasurable distance beneath you, just as every thing must appear to the eagle, when he has winged his proud way far above the clouds of the firmament.

A third class of persons may be denominated the indifferent or the careless; they are not actually bad-hearted or badly inclined, but indifferent about the practice of virtue; and when they are invited to co-operate in any act of benevolence, their uniform excuse is: "What business is this of mine?" They see a poor man begging in the street, they pass by him unconcerned, for they argue: "I need not trouble myself about this beggar, he is nothing to me." They are even asked for charity; but their gift is accompanied with some chilling remark to the poor mendicant, and they perhaps suffer their callousness to overcome their good feelings so far, as to tell a crippled, unfortunate old man: "You had better try to obtain some work to maintain yourself, without troubling others about your wants." The house of God is opened, and many flock thither to offer up their prayers to their heavenly Protector; but the indifferent man cannot think of doing likewise, for as yet he is not convinced that this is his business. To all such persons the advice is given: "Be as swift as the deer to do the will of thy Father in heaven!" Just as the panting deer flies to the running brook to cool his burning thirst, thus do you also fly to the observance of the divine precepts, and endeavour to convince yourselves that it is your business, nay the chief business of your life, to do whatever religion demands of you. "If you see the naked, cover him; and does the hungry meet you, give him food;" when you see the house of God open enter there, and let your sincere and heartfelt prayer rise up as an acceptable offering to your heavenly Father, to whom a contrite heart is the most grateful sacrifice. Endeavour to associate yourselves with your brethren in every social and religious act; and the pleasure which such conduct will afford you, must make virtue in a very short time so indispensable to you, that you will pant for an opportunity to show your love to

God, like the "deer thirsteth for the water of the living fountain."

There is yet another class of persons, who, with the best disposition to practise the good, and who are even not indifferent to pious actions, are yet too indolent to attempt doing what their sense of justice demands; because it would cost them too much labôur, or because it might perhaps interfere with their personal ease. They are, therefore, continually praising the good they see done by others, but are themselves always absent, whenever anything demands their personal aid. Yet positive sin, as well as negative evil, may be the result of this want of activity. For the indolent man may be placed in a society, where many are found who habitually deviate from the commandments of our holy religion; he sees their conduct, and perhaps detests it at first; but he does not take the requisite trouble to prevent the evil example having a bad effect upon himself. And as it is so very easy to do as others do, but so hard to make a stand where one may be left to act by himself alone, a man of the kind we are describing may be misled by the example set before him, and induced to sin likewise, merely because he cannot rouse himself to an increased degree of activity, when this very activity is the only means to preserve him in the path of religion. So too, he may hear of a distressed family, and even may feel deeply for their condition; but he cannot think of going immediately to their relief, for, again, it would be too much trouble: "It rains to-day," will perhaps be his excuse, "to-morrow, perchance, it may be clear, one day can make no difference, and it will then be time enough to look after them; I am almost certain their distress has been represented to me in exaggerated colours;" but in the mean time the poor may starve from want of food, the sick may die from want of proper assistance, and the tardy charity comes thus too late.—But if tardiness should even not have such terrible consequences, we nevertheless can perceive its *vexatious* effects in every day's occurrences; for the hour of worship arrives, but the indolent has time enough yet to wait, and he appears at the house of prayer, when the service is nearly over. At funerals he arrives, when his assistance is no longer wanted; and so in fact it happens, that at every religious meeting he is entirely useless, because he is always too late; and on occasions when activity is required to effect some good purpose, his aid is never desired, for the general good cause gains nothing by his accession.—We are, therefore, admonished: "Be as strong as the lion to do the will of thy Father in heaven!" Let religion at all times be of sufficient importance to you, to induce you to employ all your mental and bodily resources in its service. If your assistance be wanted, do not wait to be driven or even begged to give it, but offer it cheerfully and willingly, and reflect that, by the practice of every good deed, you are laying up a treasure for yourselves in heaven. Nor should you halt in your career to perfection, or felicitate yourselves at having accomplished enough; but rather consider that all, which you can do, must yet leave a great deal undone, and despite all your exertions, you will hardly arrive at that state of perfection, where you could say, with truth, We have finished our task to the entire satisfaction of our Maker. The lion, when in pursuit of prey, stops not in the midst of his course with his appetite unappeased, nor does he rest satisfied with the mere view of his victim; but he continues onward in the chace, and loses not sight of his purpose, till he has succeeded, or till prevented by insurmountable difficulties.—Just so should it be with you in the pursuit of virtue: endeavour to become as good as the best of men, let this be the object of your dearest desires, and pursue this high aim of virtuous ambition with all the diligence, with all the energy, with all the perseverance you are capable of;—be avaricious in hoarding up everlasting treasures, dissipate none of your accumulated store of virtues, and guard these priceless treasures with as much fierceness as the lion guards his spoil; and like this noble animal, regard as your bitterest enemy, the one that attempts to rob you of the smallest portion of your holy gains. Neither suffer your hold to relax for one moment; for once become careless about them, once suffer yourselves to think that any thing can be more precious, and it is an easy matter to rob you of that which cost you so much labour to obtain; as even the prowling jackal can take away the lion's prey, when he carelessly leaves the fruit of his arduous labour unguarded, through drowsiness or negligence. In short, if you are diligent in the amassing of wealth; if you are industrious in finishing a piece of handiwork in due season; if you are careful in acquiring fame; if you are cautious in warding off attacks against your body: be doubly diligent in enriching your soul with virtuous deeds; be doubly industrious in the fulfilment of your duties; be doubly careful in guarding your religious standing; and be most of all cautious in warding off all attacks upon your everlasting peace, which interest, covetousness, or bad example can make; and rest satisfied with the assurance, that this striving will bring its own reward, since the ease of mind which the truly pious man feels even amidst the most dreadful sufferings, is far more enviable than the pleasures which the most wealthy can purchase with all his wealth in the full tide of his success.—Perhaps you may live in straitened circumstances; perhaps the world may not smile upon you; perhaps you may remain unjustly neglected; but despite of all this, there is nothing that can deprive you of your spiritual riches, nothing that can extinguish the divine light within you, and no human being, nay, not the whole world, can rob you of the blessing of your God, which will, and must be yours at last, if you render yourselves worthy of it in this life of probation.

May our actions be always found just before the Lord of the universe, and may we all live so, that we can appear before his tribunal in spotless innocence; and may this be the cause of our enjoying that felicity which He has prepared for those who fear Him! Amen.

Tamuz 10th. } 5590
July 1st.

DISCOURSE IV.

THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM.

O Thou, who comfortest the mourners, and assistest those that are afflicted, look down, we pray Thee, upon the humble remnant of thy people, Israel, who stand this day before thy holy shrine and supplicate thy protection. Grant us thy assistance, and preserve us as a peculiar people amongst the nations of the earth; cause us to live undisturbed by those who surround us, so that we may be enabled to act conformably to thy will, which Thou hast expressed to us through thy servant Moses! Amen

Brethren!

As a part of the once great nation, of that people, designated as the peculiar treasure of the Most High, we are soon to be assembled at the house of God, to mourn for the downfall of our national glory. This is the season in which calamity after calamity burst over our heads, and this is the time of year in which the temple was twice destroyed. Once, we lived happily in the land of Israel,—once, we had a government instituted and favoured by the God of heaven and earth,—once, we had a temple in which we assembled three times every year, to worship our God, as one body,—once, we had priests to administer the duties of our religion before the altar of the Eternal;—but now—we are scattered over the whole face of God's earth—now, we are bound to obey laws which our religion does not recognize,—we are without a temple, and the priest of God no longer sacrifices at the altar, and the grateful smoke of incense no longer curls upward under the hand of the holy minister. All has been lost, the glory of Israel has departed, and the descendants of Jacob mourn in a far-off land.—This is a brief, but true, sketch of the state of our people, who suffer all this, because they disobeyed the will of their God, who had proved so often his almighty power before them.—Nothing, therefore, should excite greater and more poignant regret within us, than the remembrance of what we were once, and the reflection of what we are now. Once the envy of all the surrounding nations—now an abhorrence to all beholders; once feared by the most powerful and warlike families of the East—now a weak remnant, left to the mercy of every oppressor; once living in a common land, speaking one language, and united by one beloved government—now scattered, speaking different tongues, and obeying the will and conforming to the caprice of every people of the world. Indeed, has Judah fallen, indeed, is Israel sorely afflicted, because they incurred the wrath of Heaven. Do but compare the animating account which sacred history furnishes of the glorious epoch of our people in David's time, when the Syrians, Idumeans, Phœnicians, and the children of Lot, besides many other tribes, either succumbed to the arms of the anointed of the Lord, or propitiated his favour by presents and friendly alliances—with the woful catastrophe of the destruction of the holy city, when enemies, even the rudest and most barbarous of all Asiatics, traversed the land, burnt the cities, slew the inhabitants, and spared neither the aged counsellor, nor the bridegroom leading forth his bride, nor the infant in its mother's arms. All was then swallowed up in one indiscriminate destruction, and those whom the devouring pestilence had suffered to survive, were mowed down by the unsheathed sword of the hating adversary.—All this happened, because our ancestors had transgressed the covenant of the Lord; because they had refused to listen to the warning voice of his prophets, whom He had sent to announce the impending calamity; because the priest and prophet had been slain, as he lifted up his voice to denounce the backsliding of his brethren. It was, therefore, that the threatened vengeance was meted out, and this was the reason why the children of Judah were led forth as captives before the enemy.

One pre-eminently distinguished among the messengers of the Lord, both for the sufferings he had to endure, and for the almost unparalleled firmness with which he executed his heavenly mission, was the prophet Jeremiah, who both foretold the destruction of the temple, and witnessed the accomplishment of the dire foreboding.—His was a heart alive to all the finer feelings of human nature, and his mind was filled with the sublimest conceptions of religion, and his soul was animated by a sincere love towards his countrymen. He had seen the greatness of his people,—he had seen the turrets of Jerusalem presenting their bright pinnacles to the rising sun,—he had seen the multitudes of worshippers pouring from every village and hamlet of Palestine into thy gates, O Jerusalem!—he had seen the festive throng crowd the avenues of the temple; but he was also doomed to behold the reverse of all this, and his own eyes beheld the Israelites pursued by their enemies—the walls of Jerusalem crumble under the repeated attacks of the assailant—the gates pulled down—and the temple in flames! He beheld it with inexpressible anguish, and thus he began his complaint—a complaint which must ever be regarded as the most splendid of lamentations:

איכה ישבה בדד העיר רבתי עם היתה כאלמנה
רבתי בגוים שרתי במדינות היתה למס ׃ איכה א׳ א׳ ׃

"Ha! how sitteth she so solitary, the city that was so populous, she hath become like a widow; the great among the nations, the princess of provinces, hath become tributary." Lam. i. 1.

In these words the prophet gives vent to his overcharged feelings; he addresses Jerusalem, the city that once had been so populous, so great, and so powerful; and contrasting her then with her former state, he exclaims: "How sitteth she so solitary!" Jeremiah had seen the youths of Israel go forth to battle, had seen the mighty population of Jerusalem hasten out to the fight, to strike for God and his holy temple; but he had also beheld the flower of his people discomfitted, their valour wasted in vain, the remnant of the afflicted led into captivity, the temple of God levelled to the ground, the streets of Jerusalem rendered desolate, and the houses left without an inhabitant. Jeremiah, therefore, continues: "Let her weep at nights,—let her tears be on her cheek, she hath no comforter among all her friends, all her associates have become untrue to her, have become her enemies." The peculiar constitution of our people had always exposed us to the jealousy and hatred of some of the foreign nations; it was, therefore, natural to expect, that those who had been enemies in former times, would be arrayed against us in the time of our affliction; but that our allies, those who had always preserved the appearance of friendship, should be found untrue when their assistance was most needed, was more than even fear excited to the utmost apprehension could have conceived as probable; nevertheless, it so happened, and it appeared as though all the nations had colleagued to assist in our downfall, and to rejoice over our misfortune. Therefore, says the prophet: "Let her weep, she hath no comforter among all her friends—they have become her enemies!" Nation vied with nation to oppress us, and the common consent of mankind seemed to have taken from us the rights of humanity. Who thought it wrong to maltreat an Israelite? Who thought it right to extend to us relief in the hour of our distress? No one—and every bowman sent his arrows against our bared bosom, every swordsman dyed his blade in the blood of the devoted race. But not this alone befel us; for the captors mocked our sorrows, they made their voices resound with the discordant shouts of triumph in the house of God, and they asked of the exiles to sing to them some of the songs of Zion. But, says the prophet: "Jerusalem hath severely sinned, therefore hath she become an outcast;" it was in judgment for the manifold sins of Israel, that all these calamities occurred; and, says Jeremiah (including himself among the sinning people): "Righteous is the Lord, for I have rebelled against his word;" and thus those Israelites, who had neglected to obey the precepts of the Mosaic law, who had refused to listen to the advice of the prophets, were made to feel at the last, that, though punishment may be long delayed, it *will* come at length, since the One above is all-knowing, and before Him, there is no forgetfulness, although his anger and his vengeance may long appear to slumber.

Instructive as doubtless it would be to analyze the remainder of the book of Lamentations, I am fearful of approaching the task; since the words of the prophet are so lucid and moving, and the whole diction so splendid, that their beauty must be marred by an attempt to abridge them, and but little can be added by way of comment on the text. But there is one passage in the third chapter which demands our especial attention; I allude to the expression of confident reliance upon the unaltered promise of God, which is in the following words: "This will I reflect on in my heart, therefore will I hope. The kindness of God will not let us be annihilated, for his mercies are without ending." You will no doubt recollect, that God had promised through Jeremiah, that the captivity of the Israelities living under the dominion of the king of Judah was to endure only for *seventy* years. He therefore expressed his confidence in the certainty of the fulfilment, although at that moment there appeared but little likelihood of its accomplishment; saying, Let the enemy even prevail, let all the punishment denounced be visited on our heads, let our children be led captives into the enemy's land: yet am I confident that the nation of the Lord will not cease to be a nation, for his mercies are unending; He punishes the sin, but will not utterly destroy the sinners;

the sons of Abraham have transgressed, but they will not be entirely cut off, because God has promised that his descendants should ever be a people, and He would ever be their God. Jeremiah's hopes were not unfounded; it is true, that he—the patriot and seër—descended to the grave in the land of Egypt, far from his beloved and lamented Jerusalem—his eyes, therefore, never witnessed this consolation which he had announced in the name of God; yet the prophecy itself was fulfilled, and when the time predicted had expired, the redeemed *Jews* returned to their land, though in a feeble state and few in number. They rebuilt the temple, although the one destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar had been much more splendid, and the worship was restored under Ezra and his associates; and the Jews lived in their inheritance for many years, at first under the protection of the powerful kings of Persia and the Grecian princes of Egypt and Syria, and afterwards under chiefs of their own brethren. But, alas! dissension and internal warfare broke out where peace and harmony should have reigned,—brother imbrued his hand in a brother's blood, and the streets of the holy city were dyed with the blood of priests, of elders, and of innocent men; and even strangers, the Romans namely, were called in to settle the fierce disputes which brothers carried on for the supreme authority over a land divided into implacable factions. The Israelites were again ripe for a severe retribution for their sins, and these very Romans, who had been in the first instance invited to act as umpires, where no dispute should have existed, encroached by degrees upon the independence of the people, and at length they sent governors to rule the country in the name of the Roman emperor. Duplicity and falsehood yet continued to reign amongst the Jews, and every man sought only his own aggrandizement, instead of endeavouring to rid the country of the common enemy. And could such a people maintain long the shadow of an independence, which the courtesy or the scorn of the proud and insidious Romans had left them? Could such a nation expect to receive that aid from above, with which their ancestors had so often overcome nations greater and mightier than themselves? Could assassins, I ask, dare to look for such assistance? Could those who bought and sold the exalted office of high-priest, which was to be the inheritance of the most worthy of Aaron's sons, think of being deserving of heavenly aid to deliver them from their enemies? No,—for the Romans would not suffer them to be even nominally independent; the decisions of the courts of justice were reviewed by the proconsul; and the crimes withal of the Jews had been so great, that the wrath of Heaven and the punishment of their sins could no longer be delayed; and thus it was that the blood of the innocent, slaughtered to satisfy the revengeful feelings of ambitious rivals, was amply revenged. It is needless to relate to you in detail the history of the Roman oppressions, and the manner in which the war, that ended in our downfall, was commenced, and the way in which it was conducted; for ample details of the whole of these events have been left us by historians. I only wish to draw your attention to the close of the scene,—to the final siege of Jerusalem, and the destruction of the temple by Vespasian and Titus. Read, brethren, the accounts which are given of the devotion of the Israelites in their defence of the house of God. They were, it is true, great sinners; the hands of some were stained by murder: yet their devoted patriotism in that awful struggle, where every man became a tower, and every bosom a wall of defence, deserves our admiration, and we ought even to cherish the warmest feelings, I almost may say, of gratitude, when recalling the noble exertions which they made in the holy cause. But alas! all was in vain; as already said, the sins of the people had been too great, and God could not suffer any longer his children to pollute by their presence the land which He had promised them on the sole condition, that they should prove obedient to his will. Therefore, it came to pass, that the enemy prevailed. On the seventeenth day of Thamuz, the Romans penetrated into the city; but even then the war raged fiercely, and the lion of Judah would not yield to the opposing force, however superior. And mothers slaughtered their children to appease their gnawing hunger—merciful fathers strove to prolong a miserable existence by devouring the flesh of their tender offspring:—yet the Jews would not surrender to the merciless foe. The clashing of swords daily grew louder in the streets of the devoted city—the tumult of war raged wilder and wilder in every avenue: yet the emaciated remnant stood firm, and displayed a heroism, which we shortsighted mortals might say to have deserved a better fate. But He, whose throne is in heaven, in his unerring wisdom had decreed it otherwise, and the desperate fights in the heart of the city were but like the violent throbs of the heart of the expiring giant, sinking gloriously beneath the repeated blows of numberless assailants.—For, wo unto us! it was on the ninth day of Ab, in the year of the world 3728, towards sunset, after the battle had raged for days around and in the courts of the temple, that a Roman soldier, against, it is said, the commands of Titus, who wished to preserve the holy building, threw a firebrand into the sanctuary. Rapidly did the flames spread; and on all sides, towers were crushed, and walls crumbled into dust, whilst the bodies of the defenders covered the spots where they stood, and the corpses of the priests were thrown in heaps around the altar, and the floor of the temple was made slippery with the gore of the victims, and headless trunks and severed limbs were strewn about, and the wild shout of the heartless soldier was heard above the noise of the devouring element—destruction reigned all around—and even the voice of the commander, whom the sight of so much misery had excited to compassion, remained unheeded, and the brutal throng ceased not in their wanton efforts, till they were sated with slaughter. O God, Lord of all, that thy justice demanded this sacrifice! that thy children were doomed to bleed by thousands, whilst the enemy prevailed, and entered thy sanctuary with fire and sword!

This was the misfortune which befel us on the ninth of Ab; it is for this that we fast, and mourn, and sit down in the dust, and hang the drapery of the dead over the ark in which the law of God is deposited. Where is the Israelite who can come into the Synagogue on the fast of the ninth of Ab, without being moved by the evil destiny which has overtaken his people? Where is that renegade member, who mourns not for the glory of Israel that has departed? I trust, that there is not one among you, my brethren, who is so lost to every emotion of patriotism, who values his religion so little, as not to feel sorrow on the anniversary of the destruction of our national government. But let those who feel in their hearts that they are Israelites indeed, assemble on the mournful day, with a contrite heart and devotional feelings, and pray to God for the welfare of the remnant of the flock that is yet spared, and entreat Him that the sword may not be again unsheathed against us. For since the times of Titus, in every age, we were exposed to persecutions for the sake of our faith; we were summoned to forswear our belief in One Almighty God, and almost every nation has been by turns one of those who endeavoured to make us feel the more strongly the weight of our chains. But thanks to our Protector, and God, and Saviour from destruction! all their counsel was rendered to nought. They strove hard to accomplish their end,—they murdered multitudes of innocents; but all in vain, for we are yet, even unto this day, a people, one and peculiar, a monument of the greatness of God, and an imperishable sign of his providence and wisdom. We are, it is true, dispersed over every land, in almost every island; but still we are united—the bond of one law, and the belief in one God, keep us as one, though scattered in every corner. It is in this manner that the God of our fathers has fulfilled the covenant which He made with us; and thus He has proved that his mercies are unending, even to the sinful and the lowly ones. He has also promised that, when we are repentant, and return to Him in sincerity, He would restore our captives, and bring us back to our land; and that, during our sojourn in the countries of our enemies, He would never forsake us, and hear our prayer whenever we should call on Him in our affliction. O may you then always act so as to deserve the continuance of his protection! and may your conduct be such, that He may restore his kingdom to us; and that every beholder may exclaim: "Truly, these are the people of God, and these are the servants whom He has chosen!"

May the Lord of heaven have mercy on us all, and gather our captives unto the land which He has promised to our ancestors, and cause us again to hear before all nations, (as He has promised): "Behold I have redeemed you, last as first, to be your God; I am the Lord your God." May this be his will, and may the redeemer speedily come to Zion. Amen.

Ab 1st. } 5590.
July 21st. }

DISCOURSE V.

THE CONSOLATION OF ISRAEL.

HEAR us, O Father, hear us! for Thou art He who hearkenest unto the supplication of all thy creatures; to Thee all flesh does fly for protection, and Thou grantest the prayer of all, even of the most lowly. Give us then, O Lord, thy consolation, and relieve us from all affliction. Amen.

BRETHREN!

In every age, in every year, nay, every day, and every hour, we see the wondrous power of God manifested in a thousand different ways. Miracles are daily performed before our eyes, we see prodigies existing around us, but we pass them by without heeding them; for they are too familiar to us, we are too well acquainted with them, wherefore they cease to interest us. You see daily the tide ebb and flow, the fact is evident to you; but this receding and advancing of the waters does not strike you as miraculous, unless you set out resolved to think on and ponder over the greatness of the works of God. But not so the inhabitant of the shores of the Mediterranean Sea; he has a vast sheet of water before his eyes, but it neither rises nor falls like the other seas; and the first time, therefore, he views this wonderful phenomenon at a distance from his home, he must stand astonished and awe-struck at the great wonder.—To the inhabitant of an alpine region the stupendous granite walls, which on all sides surround him, are an every-day's sight, and he loses all knowledge of their wonderful majesty by roving among them at pleasure. But place the lowlander amidst these grand structures of God's potent creative word, and an expression of delightful surprise will unconsciously escape him, when he exclaims in the ecstacy of the moment: "How great are thy works, O Lord!"—The same also is the case with the ordinary occurrences of life. Any one, who should express his surprise at hearing the roar of the thunder, or at beholding the bright flash of the lightning, would perhaps be ridiculed for his childishness and simplicity, and we might perchance wonder, how things so common should retain sufficient interest to excite surprise and delight.—But if we come to reflect in sober earnestness upon all the wonders of creation,—if we view the regularity with which the tides rise and fall,—if we take a glance at the snow-capt mountains, from which issue innumerable streams that render the earth fruitful and habitable,—if we listen with awed silence, as becomes mortals when the Supreme sends forth his voice, to the loud roar of the desolating tempest: we must be filled with admiration at the goodness and potency of the great Creator, who has so wisely ordained all to work for a beneficent end, in harmony and concert. And if we next come to contemplate, if even for a moment, on our own unworthiness, and consider how often we have by our misconduct incensed the Holy Spirit: we must be struck dumb with awe and reverence, on account of the forbearance we have experienced from that Almighty Being who, though so powerful beyond expression, is yet so indulgent to the sinful worms, that crawl, as it were, in the dust before him. Some one perhaps there is, who doubts the watchfulness of Providence over all the doings of the children of man; but do we not daily see that justice *is* done in the world? that hidden crimes are brought to light? that innocence is protected against the spiteful malice of powerful vice? It is true, that we lose sight of the miraculous part of the occurrence; we ascribe the result to a chain of circumstances, to the sagacity of the officers of justice, to whom the laws of the land have transferred the investigation and punishment of crimes against the peace of society; but tell me not, that *all* is owing to blind chance, to unalterable fate, to irrevocable laws of nature—speak not to me of the vigilance and circumspection of mere men; for all and every one of these, singly or combined, are insufficient to produce even a portion of the like results.—For say, what power has blind chance to reveal forgotten secrets?—what does fate know of the hidden misdeeds of the midnight robber?—what can human sagacity avail, when the subject to which observation should be directed is totally concealed from its knowledge? Do we not rather discern here the rays of the providential light, which illumine even darkness itself?

But this is not precisely the subject to which I would call your attention this day, brethren, and I only introduced it to show how much matter of astonishment, and how many motives for adoration can be discovered all around us. At present, however, I wish to draw your especial attention to yourselves, to your existence as a people; for it may freely be said, that you are a standing miracle, one in whom the finger of God is preëminently displayed.

A time there was, we assert, when God bestowed upon the blessed patriarch Jacob, the name of Israel, as an especial gift, to denote, that the lowly righteous, even in affliction, was a favourite of his Maker;—we maintain that the Most High made known his laws and his statutes to Jacob's descendants, that they might love and fear Him all the days; and we believe, that God has promised again and again, through his servants, the prophets, that this people, so descended and so blessed, should always be preserved through every danger and through every difficulty.—And, brethren, years and ages have rolled on, and this people is still in being; three thousand years have elapsed, and the promise has not been forgotten; for we ourselves are the fruit of this glorious name, the inheritors of this holy law, and the objects of this cheering promise,—we are, in short, a portion of the house of Israel.—It is we, who are the witnesses of God's miraculous providence on earth, a living testimonial of the truth of Revelation. For in vain do unbelievers endeavour to account in a natural way for our continued existence; in vain do they aver, that we have simply existed a long while, and that we, like other nations, sprung up under the guidance of a leader and legislator. But can it be asserted with seriousness, that this does reasonably account for our being as we are even unto this day? Say, where are the children of Solon? where the tribes of Numa, scattered, indeed, yet united? Say, where do we find a people, which has remained entire and undivided for centuries, through ages of *sin* and *persecution?* It is, indeed, but shutting the eye against conviction, and excluding the light which truth displays, to maintain, that because we are daily seen, that because we are no better than other divisions of mankind, there is nothing wonderful in our escape from destruction; for, notwithstanding the taunts of unbelievers, there is nothing that can shake the truth of our claims to a miraculous preservation; for nothing in nature—though nature itself is so wonderful an emanation from the Deity,—could have built up a people so hardy in their belief, so constant even under suffering, unless it be the special work of God, and the evident action of his unerring providence. And still there can be infidels! infidels even among

Jews! Men, what are ye? Sinners, what is your aim? Will you encompass the destruction of social well-being? Then injure Judaism.—Do you wish to dissolve all ties, which are precious and near to every human bosom? Then lay your withering hand upon the holy code of Moses. But beware, ye sacrilegious sinners! you war with the Almighty, your opponent is too powerful for your weak and impotent efforts, and the stone you roll will come down thundering upon you, and crush you beneath its weight, and bury you deep, deep, so that your memory even will be forgotten, or if remembered, it can only be, that you may be everlastingly accursed by every succeeding generation! And, indeed, brethren, there is no fear that our religion can ever be injured by any thing that man can do! Have not tyrants oppressed us in vain, times without number? Have not priests forced their doctrines upon us with the faggot, the sword, the gibbet, and the rack? Have not unbelievers tried their utmost to ridicule us out of our belief? And yet we are here, that monument of the wisdom of God, which we were destined to be.—In the same spirit did our great teacher, Moses, speak, when his life was drawing to a close, and when he was permitted for the last time to address his beloved people, and to admonish them to practise those laws which he had been sent to teach unto them. These are his words (Deut. iv. 6–8):

ושמרתם ועשיתם כי הוא חכמתכם ובינתכם לעיני
העמים אשר ישמעון את כל החקים האלה ואמרו
רק עם חכם ונבון הגוי הגדול הזה : כי מי גוי גדול
אשר לו אלהים קרבים אליו כה׳ אלהינו בכל קראנו

אליו : ומי גוי גדול אשר לו חקים ומשפטים צדיקם
ככל התורה הזאת אשר אנכי נתן לפניכם היום :
דבר' ד' ו'־ח' :

"And observe to do them; for this law is your wisdom, and your intelligence before the eyes of the nations, who may hear of all these statutes, and they will say, This great nation cannot be otherwise than a wise and intelligent people. For where is that nation, be it ever so great, to whom God is so near, as our God, whenever we call on Him? And where is that nation, be it ever so great, that has such just statutes and codes, as all this law, which I lay before you this day?"

Let us understand the meaning of this assertion of Moses; he did not intend to express, that every human being would show his admiration of the beautiful code which we possess by a strict obedience to its precepts; but that every member of the human family would, when made acquainted with its behests, acknowledge, in words at least, that the laws of the Israelites contain wise and just statutes. We need, therefore, not fear that any reasonable argument can be drawn against our religion from the fact, that but a small portion of mankind acknowledge this religion, nor from the often repeated apostacies of the Jews themselves; for the legislator did nowhere say, that he came to legislate for any other people, save the Israelites, and those who might voluntarily join them; and of the apostacy of the Jews, and of their frequent rebellions, he has left us the testimony of his own words recorded in the Pentateuch, by the express command of God.—It is not, therefore, on account of the great number of Israelites, nor from their preeminent piety, that we so confidently claim a divine origin for our religion; it is solely its beauty, the extraordinary theory of government which it discloses, and the elevated knowledge of the divine attributes which it imparts, that compel us, even against our will, to confess that no human mind was ever capable of reaching a state of such perfection as to enable it to produce a structure so noble, and so well fitted in all its parts, and so well adapted to accomplish the objects for which it was intended. It therefore came to pass, that in every age, the eyes of all the world were turned upon our code and upon us, to whom it was entrusted. Unimportant as some of us, perhaps, may regard this heavenly gift, it is nevertheless that, from which the world has derived the greatest benefits. For look around you with the eye of inquiry, and you will be struck with the conviction, that wherever the Bible is carried, civilization does follow in its track. It dispels, as it were, the darkness of superstition; the shackles of tyranny are by it rent asunder; and man is by it taught to raise his eyes to One God, and to know himself as a being destined by this Omnipotent Power, his Creator, for a state of uninterrupted happiness. Am I overrating the force which the word of God exercises over the hearts of men? I imagine not; and whatever the subtle sophist may advance to the contrary notwithstanding, it is undoubted, that the world has been taught true wisdom only by the emanation of the Supreme Wisdom. Moses therefore says to the Israelites: "And observe and do them; for this law is your wisdom and your intelligence in the eyes of the nations;" and he here exhorts them to act according to the law, as laid down by him; for only in this case would they be considered wise by the gentile peoples. Here too, we have a striking proof of the divine mission of Moses; for does not our daily experience demonstrate, that no Jew ever can gain the esteem of strangers by transgressing the law? On the contrary does not a strict observance of its precepts insure us always the respect, if not the love, of others? But as it is not interested motives, be they what they may, which should be the only ones to sway us in matters of religion, since we are bound to be pious from love to God, and from a sincere reverence of his almighty power, and from gratitude for the innumerable benefits which we hourly receive from his bounty: we find that Moses rests not his appeal to the Israelites upon the advantage which the possession of the law confers, alone, but also upon its containing laws so perfectly just in all their bearing, that their truth must be apparent to every person of intelligence. In addition to this, he inculcates in almost every chapter of the admonitory portion of the Pentateuch, that a filial confidence and a filial obedience are demanded of us as the perfection of piety; as we also read: "And know in thy heart, that as the father chastiseth his son, so the Lord thy God chastiseth thee." If we do possess these noble feelings in their full extent, we may confidently expect that the Lord will be nigh unto us, whenever we call upon Him, and that He will extend to us assistance in our afflictions, and send comfort to our souls even amidst the gloom of despair, when the ills of life seem to be approaching to overwhelm us by their weight. But we are not to imagine that the Ever-blessed has need for our service, or that He can be benefited by aught we do;—far be such presumptuous thoughts from our minds:

on the contrary, all the benefit of virtue is ours, all the injury from sin must recoil upon our own heads. Moses, therefore, admonishes the Israelites, that they ought to be very careful in the observance of the duties which God demanded of them, for that punishment would be as necessary a consequence of sin, as reward is that of leading a religious life. The legislator farther adduces the most cogent reasons to the Israelites, why they, in particular, should be careful in following his advice; since they were the people who had seen God's power so manifestly exhibited, and had been especially blessed with the gift of the divine law; and thus they had peculiar obligations to fulfil, that is, to obey the precepts they had received and accepted as the law of the Creator of all.

The nature of the Mosaic law furnishes us, thus, with a number of sound reasons to prove its truth. But besides this internal evidence, there are many other arguments which present themselves readily, even to a casual observer; for no matter how slightly a man may have been induced to investigate the nature of his religion, and the events connected therewith, he must have his attention unavoidably arrested by the remarkable fulfilment of prophetic predictions announced from time to time to our nation. One of the most memorable of these is contained in the portion of the Law, which we have read this day. Moses foretold that the Israelites were soon to cross the Jordan to inherit the land, which should be given unto them in consequence of the covenant which the Lord had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; that, if obedient, they should live happily and securely, and there should be no one to make them afraid; but, that in case of disobedience to the divine mandates, they should be speedily driven from this land and scattered amongst all the nations.—Just so it happened. The land was conquered after the death of Moses by Joshua, his chosen successor, who led the Israelites to the occupancy of their inheritance. But when Joshua and the elders of his days had died, the people chosen by God soon forgot the debt they owed to Him, and they transgressed the commandments they should have observed, and ever and anon, they were delivered into the hands of surrounding nations, and they were only liberated from the yoke of their oppressors, when they turned again unto their God with prayer and penitence; and He then raised up unto them judges, who freed them from the pressure of foreign bondage. At length, under the kings, they had altogether forsaken the Lord, and the whole punishment denounced was therefore inflicted; first, the ten tribes, composing the kingdom of Israel, were expelled; and lastly, the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, together with the family of Levi, were forced out of their country, and Palestine was left without an inhabitant. But says Moses: "And you will seek thence the Lord thy God, and thou shalt find Him, when thou seekest Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul."—"For the Lord thy God is a merciful God, He will not forsake thee nor annihilate thee, nor will He forget the covenant with thy fathers which He hath sworn unto them."—And truly has this been fulfilled; when we transgressed we were not spared, and God pulled down the strongholds of Judah; He poured out his anger over wood and stone; the house of glory was razed to the ground, and the children of the covenant were scattered, and were dispersed in small numbers over all the earth. Many of our people, too, have been lost among the gentiles; there are those of us who worship gods of silver and gods of gold, and they bow down to deities which have no existence, save in the overheated and misguided fancy of deluded men. Despite, however, of all these calamities, we never have been totally without assistance; full often it appeared as though the sun of Judah would set for ever; as though the light of Israel were about to expire, never more to regain its lustre: and then, when despair had almost seized on the most confiding, a reassurance of the certainty of help infused courage into the heart of the most desponding, and it was thus proved that God will assist and console us, when we address our prayers to Him; and that He will never suffer us to sink under the burden of our misfortunes, though our deeds may not be always such, as to entitle us to this signal goodness. Indeed, it was the divine interference that was so often manifested to effect our deliverance; for no other cause could have produced a result so unexpected, and preserved our people amidst so many difficulties. Are you now aware, brethren, how great this miracle is? It is true, that it is not of that nature as to strike your bodily eye with amazement; it is not like an unexpected and sudden change of outward nature, which produces terror and astonishment in the beholder; but it is of that species which, like the laws of nature, works uniformly, though silently, and is to the thinking mind a no less convincing proof of the divine power, than a great miracle visible to the eye wrought before the face of day in the presence of an assembled world.

Since now we see that so many of the predictions have been fulfilled, since it is evident that all the punishment has been sent, since all the afflictions have overtaken us: may we not reasonably hope, that the good also will not be withheld, whenever we have returned unto God with all our heart and with all our soul? Most assuredly; especially as we see the good already partially accomplished, as has been said, in the preservation of the Israelitish people. If even the promised blessings be still delayed, if even our eyes be closing before we have witnessed the consolation of Zion, we should not despair of the happy change; for we should reflect, that the great God, who chose us when we were few, scattered us when sinning in prosperity, and preserved us in captivity, has also promised that He would ultimately do the good thing for his servants, and that his power can accomplish our restoration to our former glory.

All the prophets, the messengers of Heaven, speak as one man of that auspicious period, when universal peace shall prevail, and Israel be again in the land of Palestine, and the worship of the true God be spread over all the earth. This we call the consolation of Jerusalem, typical of Israel, of which Isaiah (chap. xl.) speaks as follows: "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God. Speak comfort unto the heart of Jerusalem, and call out unto her, that her appointed time is over, that her sin is forgiven, for she hath received from the hand of the Lord twofold for all her sins. A voice crieth out in the wilderness, Clear ye the way of the Lord, make even the highway in the desert for our God. Every valley shall be raised, and every mount and hill shall be levelled, and the crooked places shall be made even, and the precipices shall be made deep grounds. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh together shall see that the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." The prophet expresses here in figurative language the great restoration of the Israelites, when comfort shall be spoken to those that have mourned for the affliction of Jerusalem; this will be when the appointed time for the redemption has come, when our sins shall all have been atoned for, when all the punishment incurred has been meted out. Then, however, all difficulties will at once be seen to vanish, and, as it were, a highway will be made in the wilderness for the passage of the redeemed, and that which now appears as almost impossible, the reunion, namely, of the scattered flock, will be simultaneously accomplished, and we shall again be permitted to approach the confines of the land, which once was ours, as if mountains had been levelled and valleys had been raised. At this time too, all mankind will see the glory of God revealed, all will be made conscious of the errors of their ways, all will acknowledge the true religion of the Lord, all will respect that people which remained faithful and true to the word of God, and all will then confess, that it was none but God who spoke all these messages of consolation through the mouths of his prophets!

May we all live to behold the consolation of Israel, the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and the restoration of the worship to the temple, and may we be held sufficiently deserving before our heavenly Father, to receive the crown of glory instead of ashes, and to participate in the joy of those who sincerely mourn for Zion, and ardently look forward to the time, when the Lord, whom we seek, will suddenly come to his sanctuary. Amen.

Ab 7th.
July 27th. } 5590.

DISCOURSE VI.

PERFECTION WITH GOD.

O Thou who givest understanding to man, and impartest unto mortals wisdom and knowledge, enlighten our souls, and purify our hearts; so that we may be permitted fully to comprehend the ordinances which Thou hast prescribed for our guidance, and that, understanding these thy precepts, we may at all times be able to obey them in truth and sincerity. Amen.

Brethren!

If we come to inquire in what the superiority of man over the brute creation really consists, we will find it to be his power of investigating things presented to his consideration, and of adopting, from a free and unrestricted choice, that which he may deem to be the most conducive to his happiness. No other animal possesses this capacity; it will eat, only because its natural impulse teaches it that food is necessary for its preservation; it will take this food wherever it can find it ready for its use, but it never thinks of tilling the ground to obtain the necessaries of life by means of art and labour. But man, in feeling that he is obliged to eat in order to prolong life, also discovers that raw food does not suit his taste, and that wild herbs are not palatable enough to gratify his appetite; he therefore subjects to the action of heat whatever he thinks can be improved in taste thereby, and by cultivating the soil he endeavours to obtain better articles of sustenance, and many more luxuries, than the earth would spontaneously yield. In this way then man has a superiority over the beasts in a physical view; since he can procure by art those comforts, which these cannot. Yet what is all physical superiority compared with the expansive faculties of the human intellect? Is there any animal that can communicate its ideas by articulate sounds? Man alone possesses this power; nay, more, he can, if he will, communicate his ideas to those far removed from him, yea, even to those, who may exist centuries after his death.—The animal when born has all its faculties at once developed, or at best, its education, if so it may be called, is soon completed, for to all appearance, but few additional ideas can be acquired by the most sagacious beast.—But man is always advancing, from the hour of his birth to that of his dissolution; new light is constantly dawning upon his soul, and his understanding hourly acquires new stores of knowledge.—Can we now for a moment believe, that this signal superiority was conferred on man solely for the gratification of his earthly desires? can we suppose that the Creator would render his mind so perfect, his soul so intelligent, that he might be a better fed and more comfortable beast than a quadruped is? No, no, reason was not given to man, for the sole purpose of enabling him to accumulate luxuries and to multiply the means of his pleasures,—and wisdom was not implanted in him, merely to fit him to ward off personal inconveniencies. But he was endowed with reason, that he might be enabled to think with humility and knowledge over the works of the great Creator, and wisdom was given him, that he might learn and understand the precepts of his God, and that understanding, he should endeavour to obey them, in order to reach, through obedience, the highest degree of unbounded felicity.

That to think (in opposition to blind belief and dull acquiescence in received dogmas) is the duty of every truly religious man, that we are bound to reflect frequently upon the works and the precepts of God, can be proved from many passages of the Pentateuch; as Moses very often says: "And know in thy heart," which phrase evidently inculcates deep and serious reflection. Other sacred writers have given us in their sublime works many splendid specimens of their deep thoughts; and so says David in the *eighth* Psalm: "When I view thy heavens, the works of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast founded—what is man that Thou shouldst think of him, and the child of earth that Thou shouldst regard him?" We thus see, that thought and reflection, deep and serious, are a duty which we, as rational beings destined for ulterior happiness, owe to our heavenly

Father. Besides this, brethren, religion, such a religion at least as we possess, may be investigated, may be sifted, and exposed, and the freest inquiry even cannot injure it; for the more we enter into its sublimities, the more shall we be inclined to exclaim with the Psalmist: "Open Thou my eyes, that I may see the wonders of thy law!"—But to arrive at this blessed state of mind, in which David spoke, I mean, in order to arrive at a conviction of the sacredness and truth of religion, two things are necessary,—first, we should start from the proper point; secondly, we must be cautious, that we enter not into what must, from the very constitution of man, be always hidden from him and unapproachable to his limited intellect. The evil effects arising from the neglect of this precaution are every day visible, and unfortunately too familiar; and we have often seen how a correct and humble reasoning is productive of religious conviction, and how many are led to become infidels, because they approach the sacred threshold of truth with presumption, and an overweening confidence in their own judgment. And yet infidelity always assumes, and arrogates to itself, a claim to profound investigation; it affects to believe, that the religious and pious never think; it says, religion must be fostered by ignorance; and that the light of reason will overthrow the dominion of faith. But can infidels establish their sole claim to profound reasoning? Is there so much wisdom in unbelief? Is there so much intellect in refusing to be guided by the law of God? We may safely and emphatically answer, no; for if worldly thinking, which reaches no farther than the animal frame, can be wisdom, how much higher must that thought stand, which looks forward to perpetuate in bliss the immortal spark, the undying soul of man.

Let us investigate this matter a little more closely, and indulge me awhile, brethren, whilst I detain you upon this subject, a subject which demands of all the most serious reflection. For in truth, there are those who say, that religion and reason are at variance; there are those, who endeavour to withdraw from man his only support in the hour of affliction, the consciousness of the protection of God, and a conviction of the infallibility and justice of the Almighty Judge; there are those who ridicule others for practising the duties which religion demands.—And yet these are the men who style themselves rationalists! Vain boasters! for they are groping in the dark—they have wilfully extinguished the only light which could have shown them the way to true wisdom.

The cause of infidelity may be stated to be twofold: *first*, pride; *secondly*, fear. The vain egotist hears himself praised for his learning, he discovers that the world eagerly listens to whatever he puts forth, to derive pleasure and knowledge from his instruction. He becomes inflated with his own importance, and when he sees the regularity which pervades civilized life, when he discovers the profound veneration which the world feels for the source of all this good, the revelation of God: he affects to be astonished, and pretends that he could have made as good a code as that which is prized as the gift of Heaven,—nay, he even alleges that its standard of morality is not of a degree elevated enough to be satisfactory to the human intellect. He is wise and great, this he has been often told, and he therefore thinks that the wisdom of God was not necessary to give a law to mankind; and as he deems it unnecessary so far as he is concerned, he next avers that it is impossible that God should audibly speak to man; and since he considers it impossible, the next assertion is, that it never took place, or in other words, that the revelation alleged to have come from God is a sheer fabrication. Such a man who prides himself upon his wisdom, though an infidel in his professions, may yet live in strict conformity to those rules of morality which the Bible contains; he may even be stricter than those who profess to believe in a divine origin of the law. But it can scarcely be principle, or the fear of offending God, but more properly, pride, which preserves such a man from vice. He knows, that his standing in society is of that kind, that the eyes of many are turned towards him; he at least fancies himself an object of observation, having, according to the love which many feel for mere notoriety, done so much to obtain the public regard; he believes many are watching his movements to discover his faults, for the purpose of throwing discredit upon his mode of thinking, by placing his iniquity before the world, to forewarn others against following his example; he, therefore, endeavours to demean himself so that his conduct shall throw no discredit upon his doctrines.—Nay, suppose him meek and unostentatious, intent only on doing good, which, however, is hardly possible: there is still no reason to imagine that religion is the less necessary to the rest of the world, although this one may be ostensibly virtuous while despising its tenets. For, observe brethren, this meek unostentatious philosopher was not born in a far-off land, where the tread of civilization had never before been heard, but in a well-regulated community; and he was reared, where the Bible is both known and venerated; he grew up amidst men professing religion, and he accordingly imbibed, imperceptibly, those very principles which he affects to hold in so light an esteem; now he has reached manhood's years, and he continues to act as he has been accustomed to do; and no matter whether he says, that he believes or not believes, it is nevertheless true, that the divine revelation, although not acknowledged, is his moral guide. Superficial reasoners, when seeing a virtuous unbeliever, or rather when seeing one affecting unbelief practising morality and maintaining an upright and honest character, may perhaps say, that a man may be truly good, and yet not believe one word of revelation; and in consequence, that revelation is not necessary to form a virtuous life, or is even altogether false. But they ought to bear in mind, that a man may imbibe principles, either virtuous or criminal, in a thousand ways, other than by his own reasoning, without being conscious of the manner in which he acquired the same, or even without feeling at the time the new bias which his mind has received; secondly, that a man may profess to disbelieve revelation, merely to gain the name of a philosopher, a wise head, or a deep thinker; and that lastly, mere believing one thing or the other is not the sole cause of our being good or bad, for without good actions, no man, however firm his faith, can be said to be decidedly religious and good, being destitute of active virtue. Let us illustrate this by an example. A man passes along the street, and sees an object of distress, say a person just hurt by an unforeseen accident; he is engaged in deep thought, and he hastens on regardless of the distressed one, though a slight reflection would convince him, that his sympathy and his aid might be of service. All at once he is roused from his revery by the sound of a multitude of footsteps hastening to the spot which he has just left; he turns round, inquires the cause, and is told, that there is a man in great distress unable to move, and, upon the whole, the greatest object of charity and commiseration imaginable. Immediately this man, a few moments before so unconcerned, is also seized with the contagion of pity, and pushing his way through the crowd, goes up to the sufferer, and is foremost among those who offer relief. Can such a one be said to have become charitable of his own accord?—This little scene is not altogether an imaginary sketch, for I have but little doubt, that many have experienced something very similar at some period of their life; and it proves, that we may be taught to practise charity, even without intending to receive such instruction; and no matter whatever our belief may be at the moment, whether we believe in a Deity or not; whether we believe in a revelation or not; whether we even believe the poor wretch to be deserving of charity or not: we cannot ascribe our charitable feelings so suddenly called forth at the moment to any other cause than the example of others.—But now see the difference between the different actors in this drama of humanity. The gloomy atheist hastens forward to relieve the distress he sees; for he believes in an inevitable fate, and he lends his aid, because he himself may one day stand in need of similar assistance;

it is interest then, nothing but self-love, which actuates him.—The scornful infidel also comes here; he believes in a God, but thinks not that there is a Word of God to demand this good act of benevolence from him; what spurs him on to the act? pride certainly, and perhaps interest; for to the world he wishes to display the benevolence of his heart, it is so good for effect, and then, perhaps, he may also call to mind, that change of circumstances may place him too one day in a situation as also to require succour.—But far different is the case with the really virtuous man, he who trusts in God's providence, and believes in his holy Word. When made conscious that his help is wanted, he needs no other incentive, than that his God demands of him to do all the good he can, and he, therefore, obeys the mandate with alacrity. He flies to the assistance of the poor, speaks comfort to their minds, and admonishes them to submit with cheerfulness to the decree of Heaven; for all that God does is right, and because everything, yes, punishment even, must be eventually for our advantage, if we draw a proper lesson from whatever occurs to us.—It will thus appear, that, though the most opposite in opinion may be acting from the impulse of the moment, and may join in the same deed of benevolence, their feelings and motives will be very different. The atheist can be prompted by interest solely, for he sees nothing around him but creatures of the same blind chance with himself, and finds in himself a being that needs at times the assistance of these very chance-impelled machines.—The infidel philosopher acts from a secret motive of pride, no matter how much soever this pride may lay concealed; and only the true believer can act from a motive which alone can give value to virtue—from disinterestedness, as far as this is compatible with human nature.

In the foregoing, I have endeavoured to elucidate the proposition, that principles can be imbibed unconsciously; for this is not the case with charity alone, but also with the reverence we feel for parents; respect for old age; attention to the education of children; the exercise of impartial justice, and in short with every social virtue.—Now grant even, that the philosopher who actually disbelieves revelation should never have read the Bible; believe, that he knows not a word of its contents; and suppose, if it be possible, that those who educated him knew nothing about it themselves: yet as he cannot close his eyes to what is going on around him, since he sees the actions of those who believe differently from him, can it be contended, even under all these circumstances, that he, the unbeliever, is not taught the principles of virtue by means of revelation? can it be supposed that anything else than the example of others allures him to the love of justice and goodness? For the All-wise Creator has thrown so great a charm around virtue, and has made piety so lovely, that we are drawn towards them imperceptibly, and even while practising the evil, we feel a degradation at not doing the good. And as many a one is insensibly led to sin by being exposed to its influence, so may piety, being general, also attract unconscious followers; so true is it that the force of example is one of the most powerful agents in forming our character; and hence too the necessity of associating with those only, from whose conduct and conversation something good may be learned.

Besides the philosophical unbeliever, there are certain men who, although in their own minds persuaded of the truth of religion, affect to be doubters; these are generally found amongst the *gay*, or the *uneducated*, or those who, having acquired but a *slight* degree of knowledge, imagine themselves completely fitted to form a comprehensive judgment. Some of this class wish to appear more enlightened than their neighbours or those who are older and more experienced; and they imagine that by ridiculing what others hold sacred, they can acquire and deserve the title of men of intelligence. Their vanity is the cause of their apparent infidelity; and if they do not practise immorality, they are restrained solely by the fear of incurring the punishment denounced against sin, but not by a true love of God, for they do not honour Him, while they affect a disregard for his word. Every day's experience proves the existence of such a class of perverse thinkers, and perhaps philosophical hypocrites of this kind are as numerous, as those who show more veneration for religion than they actually possess.

We have hitherto all along supposed an infidelity accompanied by a strict morality, and we have shown that, taking it in its most favourable light, its sole principle of action can be nothing but pride, or at best, interest and egotism. But if even we say that a learned infidel could be virtuous in the true sense of the word; yet how dreadful must the consequences of his example be on others. They see a man blessed with strong mental powers professing to think, that the Supreme Ruler has laid no farther restraint upon our inclinations than our own reason or *conscience*, as it is termed, imposes. The infidel himself, as has been said, has a motive for doing right, as his self-love teaches him to beware of losing his fair reputation; his disciples, however, have no such check, they are of the common herd; they are, every individual almost, belonging to the mass of the people at large, whose conduct is scarcely noticed, or, if noticed, soon forgotten. What then, we ask, can prevent them from doing everything which the law forbids? The Bible *scarcely* speaks to them, since they have been taught to despise it, and we all know, how inveterate the vulgar are in their prejudices and predilections, particularly when goaded by some indefinite popular cant, the meaning of which they, themselves, do not understand.* The influence, therefore, of infidelity upon society at large, may be compared to the act of unchaining a tiger, maddened by hunger and captivity, in the midst of a populous city having no means of defence; or rather of cutting through a dyke, erected as a defence against the sea, whilst hundreds of people are standing upon it in apparent security, who must be unable to save themselves before the waters of the ocean cover them, and bury them beneath the rising and foaming billows.—So that, if infidelity should even not be hurtful to an individual, which is however denied, its bad example will nevertheless destroy everything dear to the heart; and consequently, on the score of expediency alone, even without any other reason, it ought to be discountenanced by every friend of the human race.

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* No doubt every reader will call to mind the watchwords of the French Revolution of 1789: "Liberty and Equality!" and the "Death to the monks!" of the present civil war in Spain.

If the consequences of such an infidelity, ostensibly founded on reason, are so bad, those of the other species, arising from fear, are no less pernicious. An inddel from fear, I would call a man, who after having been guilty of some gross irreligious act, or who does not like to undertake the labour which is necessary to obtain the mastery over the passions: at last persuades himself, that whatever of religion he has been taught by his parents and teachers is the offspring of prejudice, ignorance, and bigotry. Such a one is a coward; he wishes to be assured, that religious restraints are not in any manner derived from God, and consequently that He cannot punish him for neglecting them. But if he could once be brought to think, that religion owes its existence to the actual precepts of the Deity, that punishment will sooner or later be meted out for a disregard of its precepts, or if he could summon courage enough to condemn his own conduct, if he could look upon himself as a sinner and transgressor of a divine mandate: it is highly probable that this man, who denies revelation from the motives of calming his uneasy conscience, would soon become a convert to a better course, and endeavour to obey the law, the infraction of which threatens him with consequences which he ought to dread. For it is reasonable enough to expect that, if a vaunting cowardice led him to deny the truth, the consciousness, that he will be accountable for his misdoings, when once awakened, must impel him to endeavour to make amends for his evil deeds to avert the impending retribution.—But while such a man remains stupefied by sin and unreformed, while he pursues, unrestrained, his career of vice, he presents us a frightful and terrible example to what a state the human mind can be degraded. He indulges in midnight revelry; he resorts to the gaming-house, for he can find no delight at his own fireside, in the bosom of his family; in the mean time his deluded wife, rendered wicked perhaps by his example, expects with bloodshot eyes his late return; his ragged children are crying for want of food; and having sacrificed all to his sinful appetite, he himself is soon covered with the garb of poverty, and as by his excesses he has disgusted the good and virtuous of his former acquaintance, what remains for him but beggary, perhaps suicide, the scaffold, or at best the walls of a prison?—I may be perchance charged with exaggeration; but I ask, whether, if infidelity had this influence but on *one* man even (and there are, alas! thousands of its victims), it would still be correct and proper to forewarn the wavering against following the path which has led one fellow-being to destruction.

We have thus seen, that unbelief, be its source pride or fear, is equally destructive to the well-being of society no less than to the happiness of individuals; for it requires no argument to prove the self-evident proposition, that a state can only be well governed and remain undisturbed by factions, as long as the majority are virtuous and well-disposed to order and obedience to the laws.—Nothing, therefore, can be more true, than the words of Holy Writ, which declare:

אמר נבל בלבו אין אלהים :

"The *fool* only says in his heart, There is no God." (Psalm xiv. 1.) And

חכמה ומוסר אוילים בזו :

"But fools only despise wisdom and correction." (Proverbs i. 7.)

And it is only the wisdom which especially comes from God, that is the source of all the good which the world enjoys; and indeed, none but those, who are self-deluded, can ever deny in serious earnest, that the benefits conferred on man by the divine law are really incalculable. In truth, none gainsay the excellence of our code, and the usefulness of its tendency; but some wish to derogate from its holiness merely, by levelling it down to a human institution. But if we look around us, and judge carefully by what is known to us, we must soon acknowledge, perhaps much to our mortification, that human wisdom, however exalted, was never able to produce laws, the efficacy of which could be tested by the experience of ages, as that of our holy law has been.—Shall we adduce arguments to prove this? No argument is necessary; for look but at the laws of Confucius, of Buddah, of Bramah, of Solon, of Lycurgus, and Numa; did they effect that for their people, which the Pentateuch has done for Israel? The Chinese, the Birmans, and the Hindoos, are confessedly ignorant, and the slaves of misrule and superstition; and while the laws of Solon rendered the Athenians factious in politics and loose in morals, and whilst Lycurgus attempted to banish refinement, and make the state the chief good of his citizens: neither was able to preserve his followers from merging into other peoples, when they had lost their independence. And even Numa, the founder perhaps of Roman greatness, established superstition and soothsaying as a part of his government, and consequently his system too fell before the spread of enlightening principles, and the children of Numa revere the law of Moses. What then is there of degradation, what of meanness in obeying our laws? Why should pride refuse to yield to the enactments of the Supreme? —You will perhaps say, because man is already sufficiently endowed with reason; you may say, that the varied occupations of life demand all our attention; perchance you may say that, as civilization advances, antiquated statutes ought to be discarded. In short, all the excuses which interest and vanity can furnish are snatched at to justify irreligion; man must exalt himself, in order to show, that he needs no instruction of God.—But why, we ask, should a mortal exult so much? why should he rely so much upon his finite wisdom, and forget that he is accountable to the Undying One?—Why should the beautiful think so much of adorning their persons, and neglect the sacred duties demanded of them? Why should the strong one aim at overcoming all the ills and dangers of life—as though he never *could* be moved,—and disregard the will of God?—Why should the powerful, nay, even the king upon his throne, the conqueror on the day of victory, value his own importance so highly as to refuse to follow those rules, by which the more humble are guided?—For often does the wisdom of the wise fail them; often does beauty fade in its prime; often the strong are cut off in the midst of their career, and often the mighty are deprived of their power, and are left forgotten and despised.—There is an instance of a man of mighty intellect, who had long delighted the world with the effusions of his knowledge; crowds flocked to hear and to admire his eloquence; the shafts of his satire were dreaded, as though they were the doom pronounced by an angel of God; his praise was received with delight; his name was honoured by all his countrymen, and it appeared that he had almost reached a point, whence he might look with contempt upon aught beneath him: when, alas! as if in mockery of human greatness, his gigantic reason forsook him, and he, whose mind was almost a storehouse of knowledge, could not communicate his physical wants even to those willing and ready to serve him.—Many a fair one has stood by the side of him she loved; she, if any one could, might look with confidence upon a future bright and smiling; pleasure seemed to await her, and she was declared happy by all her beholders. But soon the fair, frail flower pined away; blighting disease seized on her vitals, and in a few brief months she was laid low in the dust; her husband was left to mourn in solitude, and the house of joy was changed into the dwelling of grief, because she, the wife, was no more.—The brave in arms has been known to embark in the defence of his country's cause; he was seen to sleep on the bare ground, among those whom he led out to battle.—He hurried forth to the fight, and glory seemed to lead him on where danger was the greatest; but he fell, and though the shout of victory was soon raised from rejoicing thousands, the hero heard it not, for his body reposed in death.—Once there reigned a king, who was powerful among the powerful; he was called, The Desired, The Illustrious; victory too perched on his standard, and his mighty rival was humbled by his skill, both in the field and the cabinet; who would believe it, if history did not authenticate the fact, that this king was hurled from his throne—was cast into prison—was tried like a felon—was torn even from the society of his family—and, at last, was made a sacrifice to popular fury?—Well does Holy Writ admonish us (Jerm. ix. 22): "Let not the wise boast of his wisdom, the strong man not of his strength, nor the rich man of his riches; but for this alone a man can praise himself—to be wise in knowing me, how I the Lord exercise grace, justice, and righteousness on earth, how I find pleasure in these, saith the Eternal Lord."—Suppose now, that a man should even possess all earthly blessings; imagine him to be rich, powerful, respected, and more than all, the wisest of men, what at last must be his end? will it not be like that of the meanest of his menials? It is only for a few short years that he can enjoy earthly goods, when he must depart hence to render a strict account of his deeds while here, before the dread Judge of all!

Since then, brethren, all human wisdom is imperfect—since all our power is so very circumscribed: why should we refuse to learn lessons of wisdom from the Source of all wisdom—from the Creator himself? Why should we not seek his counsel in every one of our actions, that is, consult through life the record of his words transmitted to us through Moses? Why should we omit calling for his aid whenever we are afflicted? Why should we not always regard Him as our sole Protector in happiness, and as our Consoler in sorrow? And this, brethren, is precisely the wisdom which revelation teaches; it tells us to receive as our guide and instructor the word of our Father; it advises us to fly to Him for assistance in our troubles; and it promises us knowledge for doing the first, and salvation and enlargement for complying with the other duty. We are farther commanded not to harden our hearts, when once we have done wrong, and not to persevere in sin under the plea that our conduct contradicts no positive rule of right; but that, if erring, we should purify ourselves by a change of conduct, and rely upon the Merciful One for pardon in recompense for our sincere amendment.—If now we wish revelation to have its proper effect on us, we should, as said already, be particularly careful, when commencing religious inquiries, to start from the proper point, and then never to dive into mysteries which must always remain hidden from our knowledge. These two points are necessary, that we may not yield to pride and think ourselves too wise to learn, and never to look beyond what our reason is capable to bear; so that we may not be led into mysticism, philosophizing, and irreligion. When you now, my respected hearers, commence the study of your religion, and wish to read with advantage the books of Sacred Writ, do it with humility, with a becoming distrust of your own mental powers; never think of finding fault with any thing that is obscure to you; and you should reflect, that the God who inspired his servants to write those splendid lessons of morality, and those elevated religious conceptions, must be incapable of giving us any thing in these books which, when properly understood, can be otherwise than good and beneficial. You may meet with passages which you do not understand; but do not reject them as unwise;—on the contrary ascribe it to the insufficiency of your information upon the parts you are studying. You may find, that nearly all the personages in the Bible had more or less faults, and some of you may therefore think, that the holy Scriptures are unfit for reading, because they recount vice even. But you should reflect, that the Bible was intended to give us a true picture of life, in which the bad as well as the good act their part; and God purposed also to inculcate, by presenting us with an impartial history of man, that the good even may sometimes sin,—in order to teach us humility, and to caution us against trusting to our own righteousness, and to admonish us not to presume upon our own goodness, since no one is without his faults. Secondly, when reading the Scriptures, and in seeing the transactions of life, you must not endeavor to inquire too deeply, why and wherefore every thing is as you find it; but consider, that as you have not the power of altering things at will, and as you cannot understand every thing (since even the most scientific does not comprehend the nature of substances presented to him, which he can handle, analyze and subdivide at pleasure), the One above must know better than we, how all ought to be organized, and that He only purposes the well-being of all his creatures in all He does.—With such views, brethren, you may fearlessly study the Scriptures, and think over their contents, and reflect upon the structure of the whole universe, and the rather, as you will by this means be hourly drawn nearer to your God, and be steadily advancing in veneration for his holy Word, which He in mercy communicated to mankind.—In short, it is your duty to confide strictly in God, with a single, undivided heart, and to believe truly in his laws, and to endeavour always so to live as the precepts of this law demand. And so also we read in this day's weekly portion (Deut. xviii. 13):

תמים תהיה עם ה' אלהיך :

"Thou shalt be entire with the Lord thy God,"—

entire in faith, and simple and devoted in confidence and attachment to our Father and Creator.—How this faith is to be directed has been endeavoured to be elucidated by the foregoing observations.

May the grace of God be with us all, and may his light always guide us unto truth and happiness! Amen.

Menachem 29th. } 5590.
August 18th. }

DISCOURSE VII.

THE COVENANT.

Everlasting Father, Creator of all, look down upon thy children here assembled to adore Thee, and vouchsafe to accept their prayer in favour, and may the offering of their lips be as incense before thy seat of mercy. Spread out over them the shadow of thy wings, so that they may dwell in safety until Thou callest them hence to appear before Thee in judgment. O let mercy prevail over justice on the approaching day of trial,* and seal their doom to happiness, according to thy abundant kindness! Amen.

BRETHREN!

Another year is nearly ended, and again does the returning autumn admonish us that we are approaching nearer and nearer to the termination of our earthly career. Behold the husbandman is busy now with gathering in the produce of the labour of his hands, and with joyous countenance he surveys the rich blessings which Providence has so kindly bestowed on him in the season which has just elapsed. See how every one is hastening to provide for the coming winter, when all work in the field must cease, when only those who laboured, whilst the time was yet favourable, can think of enjoying ease and comfort. But wo to the heedless ones, for want and sorrow must be theirs when the bleak frost shuts out from view the surface of this beautiful earth, and covers all with the robe of desolation. Already the days are becoming shorter, and soon the sad, long dreary nights will usurp the place of the gladsome days of summer. More and more we are admonished, that a severer season is coming, and that the pleasures, which the spring and summer afforded, can in a short time be no longer enjoyed when winter rules the year. But spring will in its turn come again to revisit the earth, and restore to us the delights which it imparted before.—Man, too, has his spring-time of life, his youth and vigour; the strength of manhood's years; the ripeness of his intellect, and at last his decay of bodily, perhaps of mental, powers; but, unlike the changes of the year, to him no youth returns, and the labour once neglected cannot be done in another period, and the time, once misspent, is lost for ever. Yes, for ever! although the sound does fall so fearfully upon the ear, and throw so terrible a spell over the imagination; and thus every thing, from the overthrow of a mighty empire to the occurrences of ordinary life, tells us: "That our days are but a shadow on earth!"—Yet our time is long enough to enable us to do many a good act, and to prove that we are worthy of being called the children of the Lord. This end is obtained by an ever active pursuit of virtue, and an always zealous observance of the ordinances of religion, which a man is to do to obtain through them life everlasting. We should therefore make it the unwavering rule of our whole existence on earth, to join to a sincere and heartfelt fear of God a cheerful obedience to the laws which He has prescribed, for thus only can we accomplish the object of our creation.

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* The New Year.

We have had occasion before this, to notice several passages of the last address of Moses to the Israelites; and we have seen how forcible the admonitions are which he impressed upon their minds before his death. In this address he had recapitulated briefly the principal events which had taken place since the redemption from Egypt; he also had recounted many precepts, and besought the Israelites to remain true to their God, and in conclusion had pronounced terrible denunciations in case they should stray into the path of sin.—The last day of his mission was now close at hand, when he thus spoke to the assembled congregation: "You stand this day, all of you, before the Lord your God; your heads, your tribes, your elders, and your officers of justice,—every man of Israel; your children, your wives, and the stranger that is within thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood to the drawer of thy water. For the sake that thou mayest pass (accede to) through the covenant of the Lord thy God, and through his oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day." (Deut. xxix. 9–11.) You will readily observe, that Moses addressed indiscriminately every individual in the camp, to show us, that no man, however mean or exalted his station, can in anywise exonerate himself from being a party to the covenant of the Lord. He says: "You stand this day, all of you, before the Lord," indicating to them, that all were taken as the servants of the Lord, and that the watchful eye of Providence was directed to every one individually, and that therefore every one should look upon himself as acceding separately to the covenant which was made with them on that day. This view also will explain, probably, why the teacher first says: "You stand," and afterwards, "that thou mayest enter;" for he speaks to the whole nation first, and then to every man, separately viewed, of all Israel.—To this separate schooling of the whole people, to the fact that all were taught to look upon themselves as alike children of salvation, may be ascribed the extraordinary circumstances (rendered probable by the internal evidence of Deuteronomy), that at the period of Moses's death there was a perfect unanimity with regard to the observance of the precepts of the law; and we are led to believe that at this time all felt themselves impelled to respect those institutions which conferred upon them the extraordinary privilege of a perfect equality in the eye of the law (since no one could assume any superiority which was not delegated to him voluntarily), besides an absolute security of body and property. And it accordingly happened, that as long as this devotion to the ceremonial part of the law was maintained, peace and security reigned throughout all the boundaries of Israel; for while the just fear of God was every where predominant, the relative position between the people and their rulers was also preserved,—and neither servile submission nor tyrannical sway was known in our land; since the regard paid to one portion of the Mosaic code was a security for the maintenance of the other. And in truth it seemed as though the Almighty had personally descended to assume, in his glory, the rule over his people. Here then was a people acknowledging One God, unseen and incorporeal: while surrounding nations bowed to many deities—the work of their own hands, and the offspring of their disordered fancy. Here was a people worshipping in humble meekness, in perfect consonance with reason, the everblessed and adored One: while surrounding nations sacrificed human victims to the idol of abomination. Here was a people protected by just and equitable laws, and living securely under the benevolent rule of accepted leaders, while all around Palestine frightful despotism ruled with iron sway, and subjected whole communities to the arbitrary decisions of deified evil-doers, or the false prophecies of designing impostors. Thus was the superiority of God's covenant manifested, and thus was exemplified, that happy must be that people to whom the Eternal One is God.—O blessed days of our national prosperity! you have, alas! too soon passed away, and we now must mourn over our glory that has fallen, and over the people that are scattered and oppressed amongst the gentiles!

But, brethren, let me entreat you on this day, when the most solemn period of the year is approaching—the day when, according to our received tradition, judgment will be held over all nations, not to suffer the example of your ancestors to be lost upon you. Reflect that you are their lineal descendants, and the inheritors of the Law of which they were made the depositary. Consider what it is that demands your attention, and by what ties you are bound to the Lord, and what bonds unite you to the departed great of early days, who were designated as the chosen friends of God, the immortal patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who, whilst yet ignorance reigned triumphant, whilst yet the deepest mental gloom covered the earth, stood forth as the champions of religion and morality, and spread the light of the fear of God into every land which their footsteps touched in their wanderings. You ought to be conscious, that it is your province to prove to the world how great your attachment is for the heavenly legacy in your possession, and to make it manifest to all nations, that you are Israelites not in name merely, and to place it beyoud a doubt, that you are really deserving of being denominated the chosen people—the people selected by the Supreme Wisdom to be a beacon to all nations, that they may be led, through you, unto that point of goodness, where virtue and happiness meet, where perfection and beatitude are united. Remember too that not only to the Israelites in the wilderness the Law was given, but that to us also, assembled here this day, the father of the prophets addressed his solemn warning in the following words:

ולא אתכם לבדכם אנכי כרת את הברית הזאת
ואת האלה הזאת: כי את אשר ישנו פה עמנו עמד
היום לפני ה׳ אלהינו ואת אשר איננו פה עמנו
היום: דבר׳ כט׳ יב׳:

"But not with you alone do I make this covenant and this oath of confirmation; but with him who is here this day with us, standing before the Lord our God, and with him who is not with us here this day." Deut. xxix. 12.

These words of Moses are explicit, and he means to indicate that no generation of Israelites, no matter how far removed from the period of the promulgation of the Law, can ever divorce themselves from the observance of the commandments of the Lord. True it is, that we have no longer an opportunity of bringing sacrifices; we have no longer a priest to administer at the altar of God: we are consequently prevented from complying with many of the ceremonial statutes; but this does not release us from those which are yet practicable—from those everlasting ordinances which were to be practised "in all the places of our residence," and through which Israel has been so often blessed and signally benefitted. Look at the beautiful institution of the weekly day of rest, the symbol of the everlasting repose of the blessed hereafter, and the evidence of God's rule on earth. The whole week man has been toiling to obtain food for himself and those dependent upon his exertion, to provide raiment and shelter for his wife and offspring, to shield them by human means from the dire mishaps of life, and to acquire for them comforts and luxuries, and to place them in a respectable and honoured station in society. Six days he has thus laboured, by day exposed to the scorching sun, and by night unrefreshed by sleep that fled from his anxious pillow. But at length the blessed Sabbath arrives; the toil of the slave is suspended; the incessant blows of the artisan's hammer cease; the merchant closes his warehouse, and the industrious husbandman returns from the field to enjoy the day of the Lord in the bosom of his family. Behold the house of God is opened; group after group enters, and all sit awaiting the opening of the service offered up to our Maker. Hear the solemn hymn ascending; hear the fervent prayer of the devout, sweeter far than the fat of rams; listen to the word that is proclaimed aloud by the messenger in whom the congregation confide; behold the great hilarity that pervades all, and can you, can any mortal refuse to join in the thanksgiving: "Praised be the Lord who has given rest to His people Israel?" Not so ungrateful can you prove to the heavenly gift, which gives rest, and ease, and enlargement to the high and the humble,* but all will gladly exclaim: "Praised be Thou, O Lord, who sanctifiest the Sabbath."

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* In the above sketch, I have endeavoured to exhibit what a Sabbath should be, and as it was observed in former times. But the spirit of gain now often induces labour on the seventh day even; yet may we not hope, that a speedy change will come over this evil spirit of our age?

In the change of seasons various labours engage the sons of man; days of toil and nights of anxious thoughts are devoted to the increase of their physical prosperity, and but little attention is given to the welfare of the undying spirit. And thus it happens that men spend their days without thinking of moral perfection; and many a one, therefore, heaps sin upon transgression and misdeed upon offence, heedless that the path he is pursuing is the way of death. It was in mercy, therefore, that God devoted *one* day in the year for reflection; one day, on which his creatures should review their past conduct, and endeavour to correct whatever of evil they may find, and to fortify themselves in the good they have hitherto done. This day is the Day of Atonement, to which we are now fast approaching.—It is this day, which has been instituted as the season of universal penitence, fasting and prayer for the whole house of Israel; the day on which the Lord assured his servant Moses, when interceding for the rebellious people, that He had forgiven their iniquity.—I said, that it is a day of reflection and penitence. It is not enough, that we should assemble and pray outwardly; it is not enough that we say, "We have sinned;" but the heart too should feel what the mouth utters, and no duplicity must dwell in our thoughts, when we appear at the foot of the throne of glory to ask forgiveness for our sins. It is therefore that the notes of preparation are sounded, therefore the *cornet* is blown on the first day of the year, to address itself in an audible voice to the slumberers, to rouse the loiterers on the path of virtue, and to admonish them to make reparation for the wrong they have done towards their Maker, and to satisfy those of their fellow-men whom they have wronged or offended, before cometh the day of the Lord. It is thus that the Sabbath, as well as the Day of Atonement, must tend to invigorate the body for renewed toil and exertion, and to fortify the soul in the true feeling of religion, by reconciling us to our God, and restoring peace and harmony between offended brothers. But it is needless to consume much time in pointing out the beauties of our religion, since they must be obvious to any one gifted with but a small share of penetration. My object in dwelling upon the subject at all, was to prove to you, that the Law itself is yet capable of being followed; to admonish you to be careful in the observance of its holy precepts, and to impress upon your minds the obligation which rests upon you, in consequence of your being parties to the covenant of God with Israel.—In continuation of the extract furnished above we are told by Moses, that God intended to raise us up, in consequence of this covenant, to be His people, and that He also would, in accordance with the same, be our God. Some one may now ask: "What is meant by the Israelites being made the people of God, since all the world is his? What is meant by his becoming the God of the Israelites, when He is the Creator and Ruler of every being that inhabits the universe?" To this we answer: To be the people, the peculiar people of God, signifies that we should be very careful so to live as this God directs; and He to be our God means, that He would bestow a particular watchfulness and a more direct protection as a reward for this obedience. Before the period at which Moses spoke, we had been chosen to receive the Law of the Lord as the descendants of those particularly pious men, who, as we said above, stepped forth as the adorers of the Most High, when the rest of mankind was addicted to the grossest superstition; but after the divine descent on Sinai, we were promised the favour of Heaven only as a reward for filial confidence in the power of the Lord, and a strict conformity to his will; and for disobedience, punishment was denounced. And when our nation, in despite of the most solemn warnings, did transgress, calamity followed calamity, and they were surrendered to slaughter and slavery; their pleasant land was devastated; their fortified towns, which seemed to bid defiance to the hand of time, were levelled to the ground, and in vain does the inquiring traveller search for the site of some places the most renowned in the history of our people; and at others, the blackened and scattered ruins speak, alas! too plainly, that desolation has stalked abroad over Palestine, and the deserted districts proclaim, that the avenger's sword has done its work.

How then can sinners think themselves secure from punishment? did it ever fail to strike, though its blows were a long while stayed? What government was more feared than that of Israel, under David and Solomon? what nation was more refined than that subject to the wisest of men? What building was more the pride and ornament of the world, than was the temple at Jerusalem? And yet every thing was subverted, and all that was noble, with that which was grand, was overthrown, when sin had sapped the foundation of the holy edifice! Let not the wicked then imagine, that he is guarded against the evil; true, his path may appear to lead along verdant banks and through flowering meadows,—all nature may seem to smile upon his undertakings; his wisdom may seem to cover all his plans, as the shield covers the warrior, from all untoward accidents! But suddenly the evil may fly down from its hiding-place, whence it has long been watching its destined prey, and alight upon the crest that never stooped; and rend the helmet, that withstood a thousand shocks; and shiver the lance which ever was victorious; and break the shield, which always protected; and tear out the heart, that had ever remained firm—never knew the throb of fear—never experienced the emotions of pity—and never succumbed to the force of divine guidance. And, believe me, brethren, that, however firmly a man may be fixed in prosperity, however grand his views may be, and however seemingly boundless his resources, there is a period which will come, be it soon or late, when all this grandeur will vanish, when the offspring of the mightiest genius will pass away, when the wisdom of the wisest will be set at naught. This we have been taught by ages of experience, since every thing and every man have been compelled to give way before some mightier successor. Thus have systems of government become antiquated; thus have monuments of art been hurled from their places; and thus have the sayings of the wisest been lost to posterity. And of all that has ever yet been held great by men, only *one* thing has withstood the shock of ages, and survives in all its youthful beauty, and this is THE REVELATION OF OUR GOD! Years have passed since it was promulgated, nay, our very nation has ceased to be ruled by the statutes it contains; yet the Word itself has never perished, and we have the assurance of God, that it never will be forgotten; but ages will rise after ages, and they shall all drink from the holy fountain, which supplies so bountifully the life-dispensing stream. Let it, therefore, be your immovable purpose, brethren, to prove by word and deed your sincere attachment for this precious gift. You, amongst my hearers, who are entering life, seize it with eagerness, clasp it to your bosom, and call him your deadly enemy, who would endeavour to deprive you of that which is the life of your life!—You, who are in your full vigour and strength, take it as your guide in all your doings, and if for a season you have neglected it, employ a diligence and a care, assiduous and unceasing, to regain the advantages which you have wilfully or carelessly idled away!—And you, aged ones, to whom the grave already opens its awful glooms, consider it as the only support which can at all make the bed of death easy for you, which alone can soften the terrors which must appal you at your departure hence, which already, before your dissolution, gives you a foretaste of the portion of the blessed in their altered state!—In short, let this life be to you all, beloved brethren! the season of labour in the field of piety, so that you may have your virtues as the result of your toil, when the harvest is finished, when your *year* is ended, and when the winter of your days can be made happy only through the good deeds you have done, whilst you were permitted to work. And if by any mischance you have strayed from the path marked out by religion, let the present period be devoted to repentance and to a sincere seeking of the Lord, before He comes to judge the world; who knows, but He may see that you are sincere in your sorrow, and avert the evil which his justice may have decreed!

O Thou! to whom every secret is known, who art the Father of mercy, receive in thy mercy the returning sinner, and dispense to these thy children life and happiness, when Thou comest to review them as the shepherd numbers his flock. Hold out thy protecting arm over these, that are the children of thy servants, that they may ever live to proclaim the glories of thy holy name! Amen.

Elul 20th. } 5590.
Septr. 8th. }

DISCOURSE VIII.

SIN AND REPENTANCE.

Ever-enduring and merciful King, Thou who reignest in glory, and who art good alike to the virtuous and the sinners, receive this day our supplication, and pronounce us cleansed from guilt in thy judgment, and slay us not in our wickedness; so that, acknowledging thy goodness, we may live before Thee, and amend the sinfulness of our ways! Amen.

Brethren of the House of Israel!

We have been often told, that man is sinful by disposition, and that his inclinations are more directed to the practice of evil than of the good. This is often given as an excuse for manifold transgressions, and the worst actions are justified by an appeal to human nature. Men slumber supinely in their moral indolence, commit daily what they are admonished is evil, and, from an utter prostration of all moral energy, are led, step by step, into that labyrinth of misdeeds, where the multiplicity of wickedness seems to bar the way for the egress of the sinner. And when we ask a man so devoid of virtue, why he does not alter? he says, that he cannot help himself, that habit has become second nature, and that it is utterly impossible for him to tell to the world, by now changing his conduct, that he himself considers his former course as wrong, and that he has a character for consistency to support; and then he adds some comparison between himself and others, who are perhaps worse in some points,—appeals to some few passages of Holy Writ, or sayings of the wise (which he erroneously explains in his justification), and may proceed perhaps so far, as to endeavour to make it appear, that he is, upon the whole, a really virtuous and a sincerely pious man; and he thus forbids the approach to any one, who might be induced to offer him wholesome advice, and to admonish him to pause, lest he sink completely into the slough of corruption.—But, brethren, human nature is not so wicked as the indolent and designing represent it; human reason is not so unfortified as some imagine, who slothfully ask: "How are we to know what is right?" Habit is not insuperable; and Holy Writ nowhere teaches that sin cannot be amended.—Yet some one may demand of us: "Does not evil exist? is not the inclination to sin an ingredient in human nature?" To these questions we are willing to answer: that evil does in reality exist, that, doubtless, the tendency to sin is one of the principal ingredients in our nature; but at the same time we contend, that this very tendency is the chief requisite to constitute man as God intended him, a mixture both of spirit and matter. Look, I pray you, brethren, into the works of the Almighty, and you will find, that He has created different orders of beings, who are all perfect in the position they occupy in the scale of creation. There are the beasts whose inclinations are purely earthly, and whose desires are never turned to the intellectual; they are perfect in their kind, for these desires tend to preserve them alive and propagate their species, and as they are not endowed with intellect, no practice of virtue is to them necessary to render them happy, and they, therefore, want nothing to satisfy their *mind*, after their *appetite* is stilled. As virtue is, according to this view, incompatible with the nature of animals, the practice of duties arising from the same is also incompatible with their nature; and a beast, therefore, has fulfilled the object of its creation, if it is careful of its self-preservation.—Opposite to the brute kind stand those illustrious messengers of God, whom we term *angels;** these are pure spirits, that is to say, nothing earthly, nothing sensual, nothing mortal, nothing sinful is in their composition, but free from aught, save a pure love to their Maker, they are unconscious of evil inclinations, and they prove their love and undivided obedience by an always ready compliance with the will of God.—Between the brute and the angel stands man,—this masterpiece of the Creator,—a being possessing expansive views and great capacities of spirit, joined with earthly desires and propensities, and having the means to satisfy these desires; or, in other words, the beast is purely sensual, the angel purely spiritual, and man is a compound of both these characteristics, so that he occupies the middle station between the inferior and the higher grades of beings. It is not ours to inquire, why God in his wisdom was pleased to form these three varying classes of creatures; it is enough for us to know, that so is the fact, and we cannot, nay, we dare not attempt to arraign this wisdom before the judgment of our circumscribed knowledge.

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* Both the Hebrew word מלאך and the Greek word Ἄγγελος, literally rendered, mean messenger, or the being sent to execute a certain mission; so Moses was styled מלאך. (Numbers xx. 16.)

Thus then we must discover, that in the gradual ascent from the lower to the higher, which is displayed in the whole system of nature, it was perfectly consonant with the arrangement of every thing as instituted by the Creator, to form man as the point where the earthly and the heavenly were to be blended; and consequently it was, of necessity, to be expected that this being should be endowed, from the position he occupies in the scale of nature, with a portion of evil along with a great degree of good. You will now see, that the ingredient in our nature, which we denominate *evil*, is counterbalanced by the principle of *good;* or in other words, if God has implanted within us earthly desires, He has in a degree fully as great made it necessary for us to become familiar with virtue; and that, therefore, it is impossible to imagine a human being so totally depraved as to be devoid of every good feeling; and we may safely add that, if we range over the whole mass of mankind, we will not find one individual, however bad, who has not in his composition, nay, in his outward deportment, something which compels us to acknowledge, that the image of God has not been entirely defaced in him; and thus it happens, that the most obdurate transgressor bears evidence of the goodness and wisdom of the Creator.

If now human nature is not so radically defective, as the indolent sinner represents it; if, in fact, it is capable of being rendered an ornament and a blessing to the possessor: we ought next to inquire how this is to be effected, and to look for the means, by which human reason can be fortified to improve human nature; or to speak more correctly, how is man to be made acquainted with that knowledge which will enable him to do nothing dissonant with the reason which was bestowed on him, and to do that only which will elevate the moral good in his composition over the moral evil? For if it is once admitted, that human nature is not radically defective; if it is conceded, that human reason has a guide to direct its steps to an always progressive improvement: it follows, that we have only to know this guide to be in possession of the means, if we have the will, to become as good as the shortness of our existence *here* will permit us,—and let me observe once for all, in this place, that this is all which the All-wise Father demands; and if we have faithfully done all that lay in our power, no matter how little soever this may have been, we have acted to the satisfaction of our Maker. Now the question recurs: "How is human reason to be fortified and improved?" To this we answer: "By the revealed word of God!" for this is the guide which will lead us in the path we should go, and which will make us acquainted with the duties expected from us. In this manner, then, we know how to be virtuous; and consequently we can frame no excuse arising from the defectiveness of human nature (since there exists none), for being otherwise than morally and religiously good. True, the exercise of religious duties may interfere with our convenience; true, the precepts of revelation may not be all alike clear and intelligible to us; but then we have the power given to us from above to subdue any obstacle arising within ourselves, from the bent of our inclinations; and to doubts springing from a not sufficiently explained reason of any particular precept, we can oppose a firm confidence in the Supreme Wisdom, and this confidence will teach us, that nothing emanating from God can be otherwise than good, otherwise than wise, otherwise than beneficent and wholesome. It is thus, that we can overcome whatever is, according to our limited judgment, defective in our composition, and thus we can supply all the light which our own unassisted reason would be unable to attain. Here now we see the wisdom of God preëminently displayed. He found it consonant with his plan to make man a compound of good and evil; a being, in whom the inclination to virtue is always contending with the desire for sin; a creature whose mind, though rude in its natural state, is yet capable of being polished and improved constantly by instruction and example. If now, no other resource besides this capacity had been given, and as outward impressions daily take different forms, and consequently convey different ideas, we should have man always a prey to counteracting principles and a slave to uncertainty. But the other yet wanting resource has also been conferred on him, that is, a revelation of what is the truly useful in the eyes of God has been handed down, to assist him in combatting the evil, and to teach him how to distinguish between the good and the bad. Revelation should, therefore, not be regarded as a restraint so much, as an assistant to man in his earthly existence and a sure instructor of righteousness. To be virtuous, then, means, so to direct our inclinations and actions as the knowledge of the good demands, and always to withstand those desires which the word of God declares to be sinful. And sinning is a deviation from God's will as contained in the Bible, superinduced by following the propensity to evil rather than obeying the commandments of the Lord, and by neglecting the duties demanded of us by the religion which was bestowed on mankind as the best gift of Heaven.

If we next come to investigate the source of sin, we shall be able to trace it to two principal causes, to which all others are only subordinate; the first is arrogance,—the second carelessness. First, as to arrogance. The vain-glorious man, who thinks too highly of his own importance in the scale of beings, in whose estimation his own interest, pursuits, and will, are paramount to all other considerations, will not submit to be directed by any one, even if this one should be his Maker—He to whom he owes the obedience a child owes to his parents, He to whom he should pay the reverence which a servant should pay to his master. Yet speak to such a man of religion, say aught to him about his having duties to fulfil other than those of gratifying his desires: and he will scoff at you as weakminded and superstitious, and he will never suffer any thing at all resembling a sympathy with the religious feelings of his fellow-men to disturb his unnatural tranquillity; and in this manner, allowing the evil in his disposition to prevail, he by degrees sinks lower and lower into the whirpool of transgression, and we have before us one who is every way depraved, yet assuming all the importance which virtue alone should impart. And still it is true that real virtue is always meek, never assuming importance, even if due to it, whilst its opposite quality is arrogant, haughty, and overbearing; and whenever we find a man thinking highly of himself, boasting of his attainments, and recounting his virtues, we may safely aver, that he is destitute both of wisdom and virtue.—A man, therefore, who is arrogant, will naturally enough neglect every pursuit except that which will tend to his own glorification; for, as he is so much inflated with the idea of his self-importance, he will yield the reins to his inclinations whenever *self* can be gratified, or *interest* promoted, and thus he must daily stray to a greater distance from the point whither he should direct his steps.

The careless one on the other hand is deaf to admonition, because he imagines that it is impossible for him to make the least change in his conduct. To every advice he will answer, that it is out of his power to act differently, because his course is consistent with human frailty,—or that he must do a particular thing, because he cannot resist his inclinations; and as an excuse for pretermitting any virtue, he may say that it would expose him to too many difficulties.—But do you not perceive that one arguing thus degrades the name of man? By saying, that his power over himself is incomplete, he arraigns the wisdom of the Creator in making him so imperfect, —when he himself alone is to blame; when his own supineness alone forbids his making any active exertions; when in truth he could be good if he would but listen to the virtuous impulse which is no less inherent in him than in the bosom of the best and greatest; and he is thus wilfully bad, and he thus trifles away his eternal welfare, by vainly imagining that an extraordinary aid from above must be specially rendered to make him religious.—To avoid sinning, therefore, it is necessary to take a proper estimate of ourselves, and to reflect that we are neither perfect in wickedness nor unexceptionable in goodness; that our reason is something, though far from every thing; and that the rudeness and uncertainty attendant on the uneducated state can easily be removed by a careful attention to the divine instruction that is daily offered to us. If thus we preserve a proper balance between meanness and pride, and if we look back on the one side at our humble origin, and on the other turn our view forward to the glorious destiny promised us as the reward of virtue: religion and piety must become the object of our chief desire, we must unavoidably become virtuous, and the very ingredient of evil with which we are endowed, must give additional firmness to our actions, and additional circumspection to our holy undertakings.

But some one may say while doing the wrong: "I have sinned, I have been wicked, I have transgressed; but Holy Writ itself speaks of innate wickedness, of sin being a ruler of human nature, I feel the impossibility of altering my way of life; besides I have sinned beyond the hope of forgiveness; the very name of virtue can never more be coupled with my name;" and arguing so despondingly he may perhaps dash blindly onward; try perchance to drown the misgivings of despair in intemperance, and thus become in fact that very outcast which he conceives himself to be. To combat, therefore, this wretched sinfulness, which would plead the word of God as its excuse, it becomes imperatively necessary first to understand what Holy Writ teaches on this subject, and next to inquire if inveterate habits cannot be eradicated by means which the Almighty has placed within our power. If we examine with candour the texts found in Scripture relative to the power of sin over man, we must arrive at the conclusion, that they uniformly inculcate that, although there is a disposition, and this a powerful disposition, to evil, there is yet an inherent power existing to do good in a superior degree. For we read in Genesis, chap. iv. 6: "Behold! if thou actest well, thou wilt be accepted;* but if thou dost not act well, sin will rest at the door; and to thee is its desire; but thou canst rule over it." Here we are told, as clearly as words can do it, that no matter how great the internal temptation to sin may be, the internal power to subdue such an inclination is still greater. It is indeed true, that we are told in another chapter (viii) of the same book that

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* According to the version of others: "Thou canst raise thy eyes." This, however, does not change the signification of the text.

God said: "He would not again destroy the earth as He had done at that time, because the desire of the heart of man is evil from his youth;" yet this does not gainsay the position we have assumed, that man can do the right, when the right has been explained to him; his inclination may lead one way, yet the knowledge of right will point out the other and better path; and so he is enabled to do that only which is virtuous, despite of his experiencing at the same time a secret yearning perhaps, for the most monstrous crime. We read, therefore, in another place (Deut. xxx. 15–19): "Behold I lay before thee this day the life and the good, and the death and the evil—but choose life." We have consequently incontestable proof to demonstrate that, according to scriptural doctrines, we have received from the Almighty all the requisites for making us virtuous, and, therefore, no excuse whatever can be drawn from the fountain of righteousness as an apology for a deviation from the precepts it contains. But as man generally endeavours to appear good in the eyes of others, though in his own mind he must be convinced that he has no pretensions to virtue: he may perhaps seek to account for his sins by saying, that his education has been defective, and that having been long in the habit of doing the wrong before he was made conscious of its sinfulness, he has become entirely unfitted for practising what he is told to be the duties of religion. To obviate this apology for vice, and which is constantly urged by many as a complete justification of their remissness, we should consider that though education must exercise a powerful influence over us, yet we are not thereby prevented from being taught better rules of conduct than those imbibed in infancy, as we are growing older. If a man now finds that his education has been actually neglected, he is bound to remedy the defect as far as the light of a better knowledge, which by degrees dawns upon him, will enable him to accomplish. Long and inveterate habits and tastes may indeed have become very strong; yet it must not be forgotten that *habit* does not root out the germ of virtue, which from its very nature is indestructible; for the impulse to righteousness will be felt even if the moral field be overgrown by noxious weeds; and it is this germ which will sting the arrogant sinner in the height of his pride and glory, pursue the blood-stained murderer into his hidden retreat, and always admonish the most heedless transgressor that his conduct is unworthy of one created in the image of God.—If a man, therefore, should have been sunk in wickedness, even during the whole course of his life, he should for all this at no time despair of again being restored to goodness; for the gates of mercy are never closed to him who wishes to enter them. And on this point Holy Writ has shown him the means of commencing his reformation, that is, he should confess his sins before God with an humble and contrite heart; for we read in Numbers, v. 7: והתודו את חטאתם אשר עשו "And they shall confess the sin which they have done." And this sincere confession of sins before the Creator is the first step towards amendment; for when a man recounts his misdeeds with a sincerity, such as he should exhibit before the Searcher of hearts, he must at the same time detect the *motives* which induced him to sin, and he will therefore be able to remedy the disease so soon as he knows the cause and the seat of it, just as is the case with the medical practitioner, who can only successfully contend with the malady, when he has discovered what organ is affected, and to what extent his patient suffers. The next step necessary is to avoid as much as possible all temptations to sins in general, and especially to the particular sin of which he may have been guilty. This avoiding of temptation or opportunity for sin has the effect of making crime less familiar, and in consequence, not so necessary to him as before; and when he has studiously avoided for some time all approaches of wickedness, he may be assured that he is already, in a great degree, reformed; and when the same opportunities should, by chance, occur again, it is probable, that he will be able to overcome his inclinations, and prove thus, that a man may have been habituated to do wrong, yet learn by care and watchfulness again to act correctly. If, in the same manner, we would but consider on every occasion when we are going to do any wrong, be this an act of violence, the infraction of a moral law, or a transgression of a religious duty, that we could easily act otherwise, if we had only the wish: not half the sin, not half the mischief, not half the strife and contention would exist; and men then would be more virtuous and happy; and we should, in that case, not be shocked by the everlasting causes of affront, by which society, domestic as well as political, is agitated; and good will and harmony would often occupy the place of hatred and revenge, if we would but reflect before we make any angry replies, whether the words of our antagonist had been intended to wound our feelings; whether the insult be worth noticing, or if it would not be better to overlook an outrage actually received, rather than incur the enmity of even a contemptible person, who may have injured us. And let us reflect that, if our neighbour has offended us, we also may have offended him; and that all men, the best even, need the forgiveness of Heaven.

If a man now finds that he has sinned, and has an anxious desire to alter his conduct: he ought not to hesitate to *mortify* on every occasion the vices which beset him. For instance, if he should discover himself to be avaricious, and that this love of money has often interfered with his charitable feelings (which every one possesses, though often suppressed by the desire for wealth): he is bound to counteract his avarice on every suitable opportunity; he should by degrees endeavour to forget, that money was once his idol, and that it is perishable like every thing in this life, and if he cannot succeed in rendering himself very liberal, he can yet attain being moderately charitable.—If a man has been in the habit of considering every unguarded word an insult, and of resenting such an insult by angry replication or even personal attack: he must be extremely careful to shun every cause for quarrel, and never to touch upon topics which could at all bring angry feelings into play, either in himself or others. Perhaps he may yet be latently inclined to anger; but when no evil effects have flowed from this anger for a considerable time, it is probable that he may not be betrayed again into improper excesses, although he may never be able to eradicate, totally, a certain fretfulness and irritability of temper. But the highest degree of amendment is, to eradicate the evil altogether, and this end can only be attained by a great and incessant vigilance over every access of the vice to which a man may have been addicted; and he should learn to prove his perfect amendment even when a convenient opportunity to sin offers, and to convince thus every one, that he has regained the mastery over his passions, and that he is once more what the Deity intended him to be, when He spoke: "Sin hath its desire after thee, but thou canst rule over it." In the same spirit does the Talmud advise: באותו פרק באותו מקום ובאותה אשה "True repentance must be able to withstand temptation at exactly the same time and place, and with the same companions of former transgressions."

As a farther means of producing reformation, it is necessary that a man should be more diligent in the exercise of those virtues, which he may have practised while he was yet merged in sin, so that by becoming more wedded to the good in general, he may be weaned from the wrong to which he has been addicted; for it is a well-established principle in morals that one virtue is always the promoter of another, as also one crime generally paves the way for the commission of more sins.—To this reason also may be referred the practice of doing penance by fasting, praying, and distributing of alms, so universal among Israelites, a practice highly laudable, and the cause of much that is good. For when a man fasts from pure motives, it must produce a diligent inquiry into his conduct, more especially if the fasting be done in consequence of any one wrong deed, of which he has been guilty in particular.—Prayers, when offered up with a contrite spirit, will teach a man meekness and an humble resignation to the will of his offended God, which should always accompany true repentance.—And the distribution of alms will, besides affording relief to the indigent, soften his heart, and, by making him feel for the woe of others, teach him to feel the more strongly, how much pity and mercy he requires of God, how much grace he needs to have his sins forgiven.

But a sinner may ask: "Will my sins be forgiven? is the grace of God extended to one so unworthy as I am?" Yes, truly will *he* find grace who sincerely repents; and, if he but once commences with serious earnestness, and with an immovable purpose, he may rest assured, that the work of reformation will go on prosperously, and that, in recompense therefor, the gracious Father will pardon his transgressions, as far as this may be consistent with the rigorous and impartial justice with which He governs the world.

Come, therefore, repentant sinner! come and throw thyself at thy Father's feet,—He will receive thee, although thy misdeeds are great; only do not tarry on account of the fearful struggle within thyself; retard not thy return to good from fear of the taunts of thy former associates in sin; and reflect, that the mercy thou claimest, can be the reward only of sincerity and perseverance; and if thy wrongs be manifold, endeavour to atone for them by a constant aiming after piety, as much as lies in thy power. And fearest thou to meet thy God? art thou ashamed to approach Him, because thou hast been so long a stranger to his service, and unseen within the threshold of his house? Then listen to what He has spoken through the mouth of his prophets, where He swears by his holy essence, that the repentant one shall be graciously received, when he forsakes the evil of his ways. For thus did Ezekiel announce the will and purpose of the Merciful One (chap. xxxiii. 11):

חי אני נאם ה׳ אלהים אם אחפץ במות הרשע
כי אם בשוב רשע מדרכו וחיה שובו שובו מדרכיכם
הרעים ולמה תמותו בית ישראל : יחז׳ לג׳ יא׳ :

“As sure as I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but in the return of the wicked from his way that he may live; return ye, return ye, from your evil ways, and why will you die, O house of Israel?”

If then thou hast sinned, mortal one; if the weight of thy misdeeds is a burden to thee: come, approach thy God, confide in Him anew, and let the assurance, that thy return, though late, will be an acceptable offering to Him, calm thy troubled spirit!—Yes, let every one here assembled on this day, called emphatically שבת תשובה “the Sabbath of Repentance,” take a searching look into his past conduct, and let him investigate in what points he may have transgressed, in what way he may have offended his Maker, and let him then prepare himself, by purifying his heart, for the coming of the Day of Atonement. You, who have wronged your neighbour by injuring him in his worldly possessions, comply with the demand of the law, and make restitution for that which has been wrongfully obtained. And you, who have wronged your brother in his fair fame, by robbing him of his honour, or by wounding his feelings, think not of asking forgiveness from above, till you have solicited the pardon of your fellow-man, even if he be much your inferior, nay, the father of his son, and the master of his servant, and the teacher of his scholar. Let your hearts be pure, let your hands be clean of wrong, before you approach your heavenly Father on that day, on which, as He says, atonement shall be extended for sins truly repented of. And fear not, that you will not be favourably received; for He has said: "Throw off from you all your transgressions, which you may have transgressed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit, and why will you die, O house of Israel? For I desire not the death of the guiltful one, saith the Lord God, return and live." Let us then all unite to return to God, let us all combine in brotherly love, and let us forget the injuries which we have received from one another. In this holy house, consecrated to the worship of the Everlasting One, let us assemble as one, free from envy, exempt from hatred; and let it be our study to prove, that the warning voice of the *Shophar* has not sounded in vain, that the fear of the Lord is truly seated in our hearts, and that we have not disregarded the voice full of love and tenderness, which so mercifully calls to us from above: Return! Return!

May justice and righteousness reign always among you, and may virtue ever be the guide of all your actions; so that you may depart hence, as pure as you were at that moment when God sent you hither to work out for yourselves everlasting happiness! Amen.

Tishry 5th. } 5591.
Sept. 22d. }

NOTE.—The above discourse was intended to present a summary of the causes of sin, and of the remedies to be applied, when the heart is made conscious of its wickedness. I am well aware, that the chief points are too much crowded together, but I preferred being guilty of too much brevity to dividing the subject. Besides, there will be found in the sequel several other lectures, where the causes, effects, and remedies of sin are more clearly pointed out. It was in compliance with an ancient custom, to preach on the subject of Atonement on the Sabbath of Repentance, that I wrote this and several subsequent sermons; and I must here acknowledge, that the arrangement I followed above, was partly borrowed from a book: "The Vintage of Ephraim," by the celebrated Rabbi Ephraim Luntshetz. The book itself, I have not seen for many years, in fact, not since I was a boy, but the general idea of the learned preacher, is still the groundwork of the above sermon, and owes to it any merit it may possess.

DISCOURSE IX.

THE CREATION.

Father of light and life! who dwellest within us all, and in whom all exists, and by whose word all existing things were brought unto being, give us thy blessing, and bestow on us through thy grace that prosperity, both temporal and everlasting, which we may be thought worthy of in the judgment of thy unsearchable wisdom. But, if Thou shouldst deem us deserving of punishment, then give us fortitude enough to bear thy paternal chastisement in meek resignation, and lead us thus to thy service, which is life. Amen.

Brethren!

Holy Writ speaks emphatically: "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the expanse of æther telleth of the works of his hands!"—and truly is this verified, at all times and among all classes of men. The man of learning will, at the deep hour of night, when darkness has spread her dusky mantle over the surface of the earth, forsake his couch, and wander abroad, to cast his eye upward to the star-clad heaven. Behold him standing for hours, anxiously gazing as each constellation in succession crosses the meridian of his horizon—see how rapturously he investigates and searches the countless host which blazes down upon him—see how eagerly he notes every remarkable appearance, how joyfully he marks every discovery he may happen to make: and then ask him what his feelings are at the moment; and he will tell you, that he is seized with a generous enthusiasm—that his heart is warmed by an admiration of the great Creator, and that his mind is filled with the greatest awe of reverence for that infinitely good Being, who maintaineth all by the potent will of his unending power!—Again, bend thy steps to a distant land, where the savage yet roams free from the trammels of civilization, where the rivers yet flow undisturbed by the prow of the merchant's ship, where the primeval oaks expand their boughs untouched by the woodman's axe—and there stand by whilst the untutored child of the forest rises from his bed of moss at the early dawn of morning, watch his eye how it kindles at the sight of the blushing red which paints the east before him, how delighted he appears at seeing the sun elevate his bright disc over the flood of the broad stream, on whose banks his little cabin can scarcely be perceived; and mark the smile of satisfaction which lights up his countenance, as he utters his humble prayer to the God, who made all which gives him so much delight and happiness.—Yes, go where we will, let us be what we may, the works of God, all nature, must admonish us, that there is a Creator, and that to Him we all owe our being. And it is this knowledge, which we derive from comparing our own existence with that of every thing else around us, that compels us to look for an object of worship, one, to whom we may address our desires, and one of whom, he being also superior to any obstacle which can by possibility oppose him, we may expect deliverance in all our afflictions.—But, as some persons may not, at first sight, be able to understand, how the discovery of our being creatures compels us to be worshippers of a Supreme Being, or how it can be demonstrated at all that there exists such a Power: it may, perhaps, be useful to set the subject in a clearly intelligible light by a few illustrations, which must remove any thing like doubt from the mind of the thinker.—I, an individual member of the human family, find, after repeated trials, that I am unable to produce the substance called iron: I must come, therefore, to the conclusion, that I cannot do it, and consequently, that I could have had no agency in its production. Still, as I find this substance in existence, and as I must be sure, that the being who produced it has more power, thus far, than I have, I must of necessity concede to him the superiority in this respect, at least. And so I must proceed at a view of every thing, animate or inanimate, and I shall thus, at every step of my investigation, discover the superiority of the Author of all nature.—I find myself in trouble, afflicted with diseases which I cannot remove; I have sought in vain the assistance of creatures like myself, and yet no relief has followed; to whom then shall I turn, but to Him who made me? for must I not discover, from the very nature of my being, that He who made me and all I see, can, if He but will, renew me also? Should He, who created every thing, not be able to order things as best comports with his wisdom?—Again, if I take a view of life and the doings of man, the conviction will strike me that, to obtain the favour of a mortal like myself, I am bound to act in a manner agreeable to his ideas of right, or in other words, I must try to make myself pleasing to the person I wish to propitiate, in order to obtain his favour and assistance. If I am now compelled to acknowledge a Supreme Being; if every thing admonishes me, that a Power actually does exist, whose sway extends over every object which this vast structure contains; if I am assured, that under whatever affliction I may be, He is able and willing to extricate me; if I am led to believe, that it is my duty to endeavour to obtain the favour of this great Being by deeds of mine; if I am again convinced that to act otherwise would be injurious to me: it becomes evidently my duty, which at the same time corresponds with my interest, to seek the favour of the Supreme by the doing of whatever He may call good and right, and by avoiding all which He may declare bad and wrong.—If we, according to this view, always regard our relative station to the Deity, we must necessarily be inclined to render him the requisite homage, whatever this homage may be; and as a necessary consequence it follows, that we are bound to endeavour to acquire a sure knowledge of all the duties which we are to practise, and of all the wrongs which we are to avoid in obedience to the will of our Maker.—As religion now, or more properly speaking, a fulfilment of duties towards God, is by the disposition of man quite natural to him, it has been observed, that the members of the human family have at all times paid adoration to a Supreme Being, or to something which they conceive superior: the first is true worship, the second, superstition; still, even this is founded upon the dependence which man feels on a higher power, only overshaded and weakened by ignorance, or the bad example of others.—Let us now briefly trace the order of various religious establishments, as we find them recorded or hinted at in the Bible, till we arrive at the promulgation of the heavenly code, by which it pleased Almighty God to organize Israel as his peculiar people. I shall not detain you long, brethren, but only take a rapid view of this interesting record, to point out to you the peculiar debt of gratitude which you, as Israelites, owe to the Disposer of human events, for his great and signal goodness, in first rearing you to his service, and next in perpetuating this service so miraculously among you.—We read in this day's weekly portion, the history of the CREATION, which begins in the following words:

בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ׃
והארץ היתה תהו ובהו וחשך על פני תהום ורוח
אלהים מרחפת על פני המים׃ ויאמר אלהים יהי
אור ויהי אור׃ ברא׳ א׳ א׳–ג׳:

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the spirit of God was hovering over the face of the water; and God said, Let there be light, and there was light." Gen. i. 1–3.

In this passage the Pentateuch tells us, that, when it pleased the Almighty Power to call beings of various kinds into existence, nothing was in being; but He, the Almighty, reigned alone in glory, in the words of the beautiful hymn,* which we have just now sung; "Lord of the universe, who didst reign before any creature was created; and at the time that all, according to thy will, was made, then was thy name proclaimed king; and after all shall have ceased to exist, Thou wilt, O Tremendous One! reign alone. For Thou wert, Thou art, and Thou wilt ever be in glory; and Thou art One, and there is no second to be associated with Thee in the supreme rule; since Thou art without beginning and without ending, and thine is the almighty power and the government." Then the word went forth from before Him, and matter was made from naught; and substances, antagonizing in their nature, were mingled, and fire and water were joined into one body, and air and earth were mixed, and the impenetrable gloom of rayless night hung over this incipient creation.—But the creative spirit of God was abroad, it waved along the chaotic mass, and soon was felt the effect of the will of the Lord, when He spoke: "Let there be light," for then, instantaneously, "there was light." Here, in but four words of the original Scriptures, we are presented with the most vivid picture imaginable of the Creator's power; and no laboured description, no matter how elegant, could have presented to our mind any thing half so impressive and striking. Allow me, brethren, to draw in this place your attention to the sublimity, perspicuity, and elegance of the scriptural language; you are familiar with the Bible from your infancy, it is perhaps the first volume that was placed in your hands by your attentive parents; and as you have thus early *skimmed* over its contents, you perchance lose, alas, too soon! all knowledge of the vast treasures it contains; you peradventure do not think, that a book so common and universal as the Bible can afford any instruction to the scholar and the enlightened man. But here lies the error; for that which can teach so much that is useful to the ignorant, *must* contain, and does contain too, a vast fund for the instruction of, and reflection for, the most learned; and, in truth, where do you find so true a portraiture of human life? where so true a history of man? where such noble lessons for his government? where that impartiality and candour which adorn pre-eminently the pages of the Bible? where that elegance, and brevity, and nervousness of diction, which have ever been the source of delight and instruction to us, and which address themselves so much to the heart and the judgment of every inquirer? Nowhere else, but in that precious book, which contains the sentence: "And God said, Let there be light, and there was light." Darkness, as said already, had hitherto covered the creation; but the first step towards the beautiful organization which now delights us every where was the creation of light;

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* The hymn אדון עולם; these Discourses were spoken at the conclusion of the service,—at first after the concluding hymn, latterly before.

and it went out from Him, with whom the unquenchable light dwells, and it spread its beneficent rays over all nature, and the creation rejoiced, and the chaos was gladdened at its dawn, and gradually every object assumed the place assigned to it by the Author of all, and the luminaries were fixed in the immeasurable space, each in its respective orbit, and the waves of the ocean rolled round the earth, and the herbs and trees covered the globe, and the fish sported in their watery element, and the birds warbled in the air, and the beasts of the land grazed upon luxuriant meadows, and every being seemed happy as it came in perfection from the hands of our God.—To crown his works, God made man, at the last, from the dust of the earth, and breathed into him the spirit of life, and gave him understanding and knowledge, and endowed him more than any other earthly creature with intelligence and beauty, and assigned him a companion in every respect suited to his wants; and to these two creatures, so greatly endowed, He gave the dominion over every thing found on earth.—Man was, as we are told in the account transmitted to us, created with a twofold disposition, one the inclination to good, the second the inclination to evil; or, to speak more correctly, he had the faculty given him of choosing between doing and omitting any act which might come in his way, not being compelled by any supernatural influence to do, nor withheld by the same means from doing whatever might suit his fancy or convenience. This being so created and constituted was placed in a delightful spot, where every thing necessary for his preservation was supplied in abundance, and he was told, that he might freely eat of the fruit of every tree in this spot, or garden as it is called, with the exception of one tree, called the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which alone was forbidden to him; at the same time also, he was told, that death should be the consequence, as a punishment for the transgression of this, the first and only commandment of the Deity.—You will observe, brethren, that no force was laid upon man's inclination, he was left at liberty to act as he might choose; but with the transgression, he was also to take the consequence. And so then it happened, that both the wife and man yielded to their inclination, and ate of that which had been prohibited to them by their God. Their regret now came too late; and the merciful Avenger soon told them of their doom, that henceforth sorrow and labour should be their portion, instead of the uninterrupted enjoyment which had been theirs at their first creation, and the separation of the soul from the body was at length to ensue, when they had toiled their appointed time on earth. —Yet, even in this altered state, there was pointed out to them the way of happiness; for the Almighty did not cast them off utterly, but immediately provided them with necessaries suited to their altered state, and imbued their minds with firmness to oppose resignation to labour, and perseverance to difficulty; and He also taught them, that by an humble repentance his favour might at all times be obtained, though the transgressions had been great. Thus, it came to pass, that man was sent forth from Eden, to regain by toil and the practice of virtue the favour of God which he had forfeited, by neglecting the only precept he had received from his Maker.

Soon after this, the mortal progeny of Adam increased on earth, but they wilfully neglected to propitiate the favour of their heavenly Father, and, regardless of the restraints his ordinances had laid on their passions, they indulged in the grossest dissipation, and filled the earth with unnatural deeds of violence. God looked down with displeasure upon the misdeeds of his creatures and seeing them deserving of punishment, He resolved to let justice take its course, and it appeared, as though He had changed his policy to mankind; for instead of causing them to prosper and multiply exceedingly, He now determined to exterminate the race, that defyingly had said to Him their God: "Depart thou from us!" But even in that degenerate age there were those who had not departed from the path of righteousness, those who had clung unto God, when all others went astray; and they were, therefore, singled out for preservation, when all the rest were swept away, when the devouring flood buried all beneath the foaming surge, which for an entire year covered the surface of the earth like one vast, uninterrupted, limitless ocean. The rain poured down in torrents for forty days and forty nights, the water seemed to rise, and in fact was rising out of the bowels of the earth; and every living thing on the dry land was carried off, and every vestige of man's ingenuity was deluged, and only Noah, and those with him in the ark, were preserved amidst this general ruin.—Again the family of man multiplied, and they began gradually to spread over the face of the earth. They, however, soon forgot, or brought themselves to forget, the frightful catastrophe, the effects of which are to this very day visible all over the globe, well assured by the promise of God, that the like calamity should never happen again. They lived at the time, of which we are speaking, in the plain of Shinar, and they spoke all one language and one dialect, for as yet division had not corrupted the tongue of the sons of Noah. But they had been told by the divine decree: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it;" this they wanted to prevent, they wished not to spread over the earth in detached nations; they, therefore, built themselves a tower and a city, vainly imagining, that by so doing they might have a security that they should never be separated. But God, displeased at their opposition to his decree, caused it to happen, that all of a sudden they spoke different languages, so that one could not understand the speech of the other, and they had to cease from their building, and were henceforward scattered over the earth. Thus, mankind began to be divided into families, and each portion chose a government, such as pleased them best; and by degrees the divisions between nations became more strongly marked, the greater the distances that divided them, and the more varied their respective languages were. But they too soon forgot the punishment they had suffered for their rebellion against God, and they neglected entirely the precepts they had received from Him. They, indeed, felt the want of a worship, and of a being to be worshipped; but the simple truth of *one universal God* did not suit the views of their tyrannical rulers, for then these too would have been obliged publicly to acknowledge their dependence upon the power of.the universal Sovereign of all things. They, therefore, endeavoured to lead the minds of the community astray from the true God, and by their emissaries and pretended wonder-workers made them believe that other things, those visible to the eyes, had also an inherent power of doing as they liked, unchecked by a superior agency, and they erected altars to the sun, and moon, and the whole host of heaven, and made images to represent the deity, and bowed down before idols of abomination, and became daily and hourly more estranged from the worship of God; till at length they acknowledged mere men as gods, nay more, they learnt to worship beasts, some even the most loathsome reptiles, and others, lastly, inanimate substances, to which they in their ignorance and folly ascribed divine powers. To perpetuate these superstitious usages a privileged class was instituted, to the members of which pretended secrets were intrusted, and who were exempt from public burdens and entirely separated from the rest of their countrymen. They feigned to prognosticate future events by the course of planets, by the appearance of the clouds, and even by the flight of birds, and the inspection of the entrails of slaughtered beasts; and the ravings of a maniac, or of a designing impostor, were regarded as the infallible decree of the God, before whom truth alone can stand. They also invented a false account of the origin of the world, and by interposing some other sensible and active being between God and man, they withdrew both the ignorant and the learned from the path of righteousness, till at last the frightful spectacle of human sacrifice was every where* exhibited, and men were rendered infatuated enough to believe, that human blood was the most acceptable offering to appease the gods.—This was, indeed, a dreadful, a deplorable state of morals; and this horrible infatuation had wellnigh seized the minds of all mankind, had not a man with a true spirit arisen in that very land where idolatry had assumed the loftiest aspect, and where its very grandeur was well calculated to benighten the strongest understanding. It is highly probable, that the Chaldeans had made great progress in the knowledge of the heavens, and that the priests were the greatest astronomers of those days. They had thus the power of enslaving the public mind by foretelling those things which, as they well knew from their calculations, were to happen in the due course of nature. And yet, among these men it was, where our great ancestor lighted for the first time the lamp of the truest and best of sciences—the knowledge of God.—Yes, brethren, it was in the land of Chaldea, that Abram, as he was first named, stepped boldly forth, avowing his acknowledgment of the God of heaven and earth alone, and here he withstood (as we are told by our traditions) the trial of the greatest personal dangers. For it was natural enough, that the tyrants and deceivers of his native land should fear a man whose doctrines might well have hurled them from their thrones, when the people had been once convinced that their rulers were of the same origin with themselves; for you must know, that many of these wicked despots had asserted that they were descended from deified beings! But our God was Abram's protection, and He caused him to escape unscathed from the fiery furnace, and bid him to go forth from his native soil, to spread the knowledge of the Lord in other and more distant countries. And much had Abram to suffer whilst on this mission, but all was esteemed light by him, who bore his elevation with such great meekness, who only labored in the holiest of causes; and, therefore, his virtue was recorded on high, and his sufferings were to be recompensed by much happiness;—his name was changed to Abraham, signifying that he should be the father of a multitude of nations, and he was blessed with a son at the age of a hundred years, and he sunk into the grave, after a long life of usefulness and activity. It was thus, that the true knowledge of God ever found its defenders in times of the grossest darkness and superstition, and it therefore came to pass, that the descendants of this patriarch were singled out as the favoured people of God, on account of the virtue of their ancestors, and they were prepared by a long period of suffering for the glorious epoch, when they were made the depositary of God's will.—In the mean time the world advanced in refinement; but the worship which was pleasing to the Almighty was preserved, in all likelihood, among but few, except the descendants of the patriarchs, and these were toiling in hopeless servitude for cruel masters, in whose land they had at first been received as welcome guests. But when the appointed hour had arrived, they were led forth, to be freed in body and disenthralled in soul, into the wilderness under the guidance of the great and pious leader, Moses, the son of Amram, and at the foot of yon Sinai, in the land of Arabia, they were informed of the will of God, and certified, that they could gain his favour by an obedience to his laws only.—And did God teach them his law with an appeal to their feelings, or by rousing their fears? No; for He announced himself simply: "I am the everlasting One thy God," thus pointing out to them briefly their relation to Him,—that they were creatures, and He the Creator; and in this comprehensive revelation they were informed, that they owed their life, their freedom, in fact all they could then, or at any other time, call their own, to the bounty of Him who addressed them; and the conviction was in this way naturally brought to their minds, that if they wished to prosper, they must direct their ideas, their hopes and their worship to Him, who had created them all, and in whose power were their lives and happiness.

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* Every where! Yes, gentle reader, even among the Grecians and Romans; witness the sacrifice of Ephigenia, and of the consul Decius, as late as after the year 400 of the building of Rome.

In this light then should the history of the Creation be regarded, as an exposition of our relation to God; and if we reflect well on this subject; if we always view ourselves as creatures, dependent upon the bounty of the Creator; if on every occasion we search for truth where alone it can be found—in the book which contains the record of the Almighty's will;—if we view with becoming reverence the works of His hands: we must be filled with adoration, with fear, with awe for the One who, though so infinitely great, regards us with so much love, with so much kindness. But, brethren, let the presumptuous thought never enter into your inquiries: "What is God? why did He make the world?" for these and similar questions must always remain concealed from you; since, if even you impiously deny all moral responsibility to the One Supreme, you are not in the slightest degree nearer the solution of the mysteries of creation. Rather adopt the advice contained in the following,* from one of our gifted poets, who says: "And consider who thou art, and whence thy origin, and who it is that framed thee, and who gave thee wisdom, and whose power moveth thee; and O look at the mighty works of God, and wake thy soul to action; search His works; but towards Him, presume not to stretch out thy hand; for here thou wouldst ever search in what is hidden and concealed from thee."—And truly, this humble searching, this pious inquiry after attainable truths, must improve the heart, and will assuredly render us worthy of being made children of everlasting happiness, when dwelling in the more immediate presence of God, when freed from all earthly cares, when elevated above all mortal desires, we shall be permitted to roam from region to region of wisdom and understanding, and be rewarded with a more extended sphere of knowledge, for having, whilst labouring in the vale of tears, sacrificed our desires and yielded our inclinations to the service of Him, who spoke and the world sprung into existence!

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* The conclusion of the hymn, beginning: "O Lord! I will extol thy name," from the service of the second New-Year's-Day. The above version differs materially from that of David Levi, who seems, strange enough, to have entirely misunderstood the poet's meaning.

May this be our lot and the portion of all Israel! Amen.

Tishry 27th. } 5591.
October 14th. }

DISCOURSE X.

PIOUS REFLECTIONS.

To the God, who sits enthroned in glory, be praise and adoration! Amen.

Brethren!

Since the cares of life are so various, and since so many occurrences tend daily to chain our exclusive attention almost, withdrawing thereby our ideas from the pursuit of wisdom and the observance of religious duties: it becomes necessary for us to adopt, if possible, some infallible guides, which may lead us back to the path we should go, whenever we find ourselves on the point of being withdrawn into devious ways. It is known to you all, how great the force of example is: what then is to deter us from following the evil which others around us practise?—Again, we hourly see, how often men are misled by an apparent necessity: what shall we oppose to such a circumstance, when we ourselves are tempted?—And, lastly, many a one has been outwardly good, till an opportunity for sin presented itself in alluring colors: how shall we manage to avoid falling into the snare, which such an opportunity may lay for our unsteady feet?

It must be evident to the reflecting mind, that unless a person thinks correctly, it will be almost impossible for him to act correctly, since actions are, for the most part, the offspring of preconceived thoughts, and since but rarely anything is done from what is commonly called the impulse of the moment; for even where a rash deed is committed, it will be found, upon investigation, to proceed from a train of ideas a long while indulged in, or it will be in accordance with the person's general conduct. Thus a man, who commits murder in a violent fit of anger, will doubtlessly have been in the habit of indulging in angry outbreaks of passion; and one, who habitually gives the reins to his evil desires, will also be found obeying this impulse whenever he can. In the same manner, virtue will be found to be, for the most part, the child of a good train of thinking; and we therefore say of one man, that he acts from good principles, and of another, that his principles (or customary motives of action) are bad.—The question now arises: "By what process are we to bring our mind to a virtuous mode of thinking, and by what means are we to guard ourselves against being allured by false ideas of right and wrong?"—You must also observe, brethren, that we are very often placed in situations, where the motives for choosing between good and evil are very nearly balanced, if we take merely a superficial view of the case; and it requires the exercise of a great degree of fortitude and forbearance, to remain firm in the practice of the right, especially if it should happen, that the greater portion of those around us, do the wrong or neglect the good.—With these views premised, let us proceed to the following moral aphorism, from the third chapter of the Proverbs of the Fathers:

עקביא בן מהללאל אומר הסתכל בשלשה דברים ואין אתה בא לידי עברה ' דע מאין באת ' ולאן אתה הולך ' ולפני מי אתה עתיד לתן דין וחשבון : מאין באת מטפה סרוחה ' ולאן אתה הולך למקום עפר רמה ותולעה ' ולפני מי אתה עתיד לתן דין וחשבון לפני מלך מלכי המלכים הקדוש ברוך הוא : אבות ג' א' :

"Akabia the son of Mahalalel said: Consider well three things, and thou wilt not be led into the power of sin; reflect on thy origin, whither thou art going, and before whom thou must once render an account of thy actions. Thou comest from an obscure origin; thou goest to a place of dust, worms, and corruption; and thou must be at length judged by, and render an account of thy doings before the King of the mightiest kings, the Holy One, to whom be praise."

The words of this wise moralist convey to us the guide which is to lead us in every transaction of life, and which, if properly followed, will always preserve us from the power of sin. In a former discourse, we have defined sin to be a departure from the commandments of God, superinduced by preferring to obey the inclination to evil which is within us. To avoid, therefore, obeying the evil impulse, we are advised by our wise men to reflect well upon our origin, our end, and our ultimate destination, inasmuch as we are destined to appear in judgment before the dread and impartial Judge, who notices all our actions.—

"Thou camest," says Akabia, "from an humble origin;" reflect, O son of man! what thy beginning was, look back upon the period of thy birth, and consider what was then thy strength. Thou sprangest into existence a weak and tender infant, no speech was thine to express thy wants, and only the tears of infantile anguish proclaimed to thy nurses that thou wast in pain, and thou wast glad, when thy pressing wants were satisfied, and thy penetration was not yet sufficiently developed to look forward to the coming day.—Was this a state at all calculated to fill thy mind with pride? what wouldst thou have been if left to thyself? what was thy strength able to effect? wouldst thou have been capable to provide thyself with food and to ward off the pain caused by exposure to heat, to cold, to changes of climate and seasons? Thou now possessest the faculty to express thy wishes and thoughts by articulate words; but say, wouldst thou have been enabled to do so, if thy mother and thy friends had not early taught thee? If thou hadst been left to thy own care, been thrown back upon thy own resources, can it be possible that knowledge too would have been thine, that science would have had charms for thee? No, no, vain man, thou wouldst have perished for want, were it not that the guardians of thy infancy had watched over thee, and provided, perhaps with the sweat of their brow, for thy many wants; to them thou art indebted, that thou canst speak, that thou art delighted with knowledge, that thou art elevated above the brute animal, which now obeys thy nod. And yet thou boastest? and yet thou lookest down with scorn upon the ignorance of the untutored savage? and yet thou art vain of thy acquirements?—Rather it would be seemly, that thou shouldst be humble and meek and regard those with pity that are not so highly favoured; and thou oughtest to consider that thy origin is like theirs, that thou too art a man, subject to the same rule, and living by the favour of the same God,—the God, from whom all is derived,—the God, who provideth and careth for all and every one of his creatures. If then, mortal one! thy heart should feel elated with pride, if thou seest thyself blest with wisdom and knowledge, if thou art possessed of wealth and honour: thou shouldst consider, that the creature ought not to be proud before the Creator, and that thy wisdom, thy riches, and thy honours, are the gifts of the Almighty. If thus thou thinkest, thou wilt walk in humble meekness before the Lord, thou wilt love all those that are like thee of the same humble beginning, destined for the same glorious end; and thou wilt then gladly obey his will, and shun the evil which He hates; and viewing thy existence in this state as a time of trial and probation, thou wilt regard all earthly blessings as valuable only if tending to promote thy permanent good; and thou wilt say with the Psalmist: "I am but a pilgrim before Thee, a stranger like all my fathers!"

Says the moralist, in continuation of his admonition: "Thou goest to a place of dust, worms, and corruption." Man, in the pursuit of his occupations, seems to act as though he were fixed in this life for ever. His plans are extensive, he calculates on making his power and his influence felt far and near, and lives—forgetful of the duties of religion, regardless of the rights of his fellow-men, striving only to gratify his desires, and intent on increasing his worldly stores.—To such a one the wise man says: "Regard whither thou art going, to a place of dust, worms, and corruption." Yes, come hither, wicked one,—come, gaze upon this corrupted remnant of humanity; nay, do not avert thy eyes, but gaze steadfastly; this skeleton, nearly bereft of flesh, was once a man like thyself; he was wise, and thousands listened to his counsel; he was great, and every one feared his wrath; he but spoke, and his commands were obeyed; princes waited in his out-courts, and nations expected with anxiety the decisions of his will; but he at length sickened, and his soul was fain to leave his diseased body; he was lowered into the grave, his flesh was given to corruption, and now, the very worms disdain to dwell any longer in *their* palace, where they have rioted so long. Nay, more, all that he built on earth has been pulled down, his wisdom has barely left a trace behind, and strangers now enjoy all he had amassed with so much care and with so much labour. And yet thou only thinkest of gratifying thy desires? thou heedest not the coming day, when the sight of thy eyes will depart, when the hearing of thy ears will vanish, and when thy proud heart will cease to beat? But say—was it for this that life was given thee—wast thou for this purpose sent on earth—merely to live in luxury, to gratify base desires, and to be careless of the welfare of thy soul? Rather let the coming day of thy dissolution act as a constant warning to thee, that thou art frail and mortal; reflect that nothing of all thy amassed wealth will accompany thee to the grave, that not one of the indulgencies of pleasure will benefit thee aught at thy departure, and that only the virtues which thou hast made thy own, that only the good deeds which thou hast done, will make thy rest easy and thy after-existence glorious. And since "thou art dust, and to dust thou must return," it is thy duty to shun every evil which may endeavour to allure thee; and if the struggle be great, if thou seest even all thy associates forsake the way of good: thou shouldst consider, that the struggle once past, the difficulties once overcome, the satisfaction thou wilt feel must be infinitely greater than the gratification of the passions could possibly have yielded.

As a last remedy against the approach of sin, we are advised to reflect, "before whom we are to be judged, and who it is before whom we are to render an account of all our actions." Man in the hurry of busy life may imagine that his deeds will pass unnoticed; nay, he may be convinced, that no human eye is witness to his proposed conduct, and he may suppose, that he has taken all the means necessary to escape detection; he may therefore presume perhaps to do wrong, fancying himself secured against all punishment. But though man's vigilance may thus be eluded, let the sinner reflect, that there is an *eye* above which is always open; that there is a *watchfulness* which is ever awake; that there is a *Providence* which never slumbers; that there is a *superintending Being* who never forgets: and then let him deem himself screened against evil, let him imagine his misdeeds buried in oblivion. Hah! should God not see, though man be deceived? is God not able to mete out punishment, though human power be eluded? And grant, even, that through a long life on earth a man should have been suffered to pass along in worldly prosperity; even let his pleasures have been unalloyed by sorrow; even let his family have grown up around him blest with health, with riches, with power, and with wisdom; yes, grant all this—but has he, after all, the slightest reason for supposing that retribution will never reach him? can he believe that all danger is past with the end of the career, the short career on earth? No, vain-glorious sinner! no, irreligious offender! with this life thy existence endeth not! thy stay on earth is but a stage in thy being! for know, when thy body is buried in its kindred earth, when thy bones have been surrendered to corruption, then thy soul, thy spirit, thy *self* will be compelled to appear before the judgment throne of thy Maker, to answer for deeds done in the flesh, while thou wast, as man, empowered to spend thy days in the service of thy God, and in acts of benevolence towards thy fellow-men. And yet thou canst glory in thy iniquity? and yet thou retainest the wrongfully acquired substance of the orphan and the widow in thy possession? How canst thou dare to think of thus meeting the impartial Judge? what are thy good deeds in comparison with thy sins? will not the noble time so misspent, the valuable opportunities for ennobling the mind so neglected, the injury done to the helpless that confided in thy honesty, rise up against thee, and be thy accusers? Miserable, self-deluded worm! fearest thou not the Creator—art thou heedless of incurring his just indignation—weenest thou that He is not potent to punish?—then listen to the dreadful storm—which is but the breath of his nostrils; and hearken to the loud pealing thunder—the echo of his voice when He speaks; and behold the devouring flame of the bright lightning, which is only the flash of his eye!—and then consider, that He is thy Author, and thy Father, and only desirous of thy welfare, but that He is also thy Judge, that from Him nothing is hidden, by Him nothing is forgotten, and that to Him thou art at length compelled to return, though thou shouldst live a thousand years. And must thou not tremble at thy own ingratitude, be amazed at thy effrontery, and cower in the very dust for shame at thy presumption, in disregarding the warning of thy everlasting Benefactor, that would gladly render thee happy and blessed unto all eternity?—Let this view, therefore, allay thy obduracy, let it soften thy heart, let it lower thy pride; and if thou art once fully alive to the impressive knowledge, that thou art but "man born of woman, short of days and full of trouble," and that He above "is God, great and highly extolled, to whose greatness there is no end," thou wilt not soon be led into sin; since thou must then be always animated by a sincere attachment and reverence for the great Being, who so kindly sustains thee, who so bountifully provides for thy daily wants, and who has so graciously given thee a law, by following which thou canst always gain his favour, and secure unto thyself everlasting happiness!

May virtue and life everlasting be our portion! Amen.

Cheshvan 23d. } 5591.
November 9th. }

DISCOURSE XI.

THE FESTIVAL OF HANUCKAH.

Almighty Father, who watchest with unbounded solicitude over the welfare of thy creatures, and who hast so often held out thy protecting arm over thy people Israel, save us now, protect us now and for ever, because of thy holy name by which we are called! Amen.

Brethren!

The wisest of men, speaking by divine inspiration, says:

מגדל עז שם ה׳ בו ירוץ צדיק ונשגב ׃ משלי יח׳ י׳ ׃

"A tower of strength is the name of the Lord; to it, the righteous runneth and is protected." Prov. xviii. 10.

And truly has this been so often exemplified, that a man must, indeed, be totally blinded by prejudice, and perfectly heedless of what passes hourly before his eyes, if he is unwilling to acknowledge this truth. Look, brethren, I beseech you, upon the occurrences of your lives, and see you not how often very inadequate means have brought about unexpected results, unexpected even to yourselves, who were the sole actors? By whose agency was this accomplished? Not by your wisdom, for you did not contemplate, as likely, the actual result.—Not by your industry, for the means were, to all appearance, inadequate to the accomplished end. And nevertheless, you see the fact too plainly to doubt it; you must, therefore, confess in your hearts, that the All-ruling God proved to you his superintendence over the affairs of man, even if, in your own estimation, you belong to that class of individuals, whose existence and doings have apparently no great influence on the welfare of society at large. If this is shown in the affairs of individuals, we shall see it, perhaps, oftener in the transactions of nations, if we will but be attentive observers; for here also, the power and superintendence of God are displayed too palpably to escape the notice of the inquirer after truth. And no nation, however great its power, however ancient its first rise, has had more examples in its history of great deeds done by small means, than we can show —we, the descendants of Israel, selected from among all nations by the All-wise Ruler to be his people— to be devoted to his service—and to be a beacon to all other families of the earth.—Truly, well may Israel say: "Oft have enemies pressed me hard from the time of my youth; oft have they pressed me hard from the time of my youth, yet they did not overcome me. On my back the ploughmen ploughed; they drew long their furrows; but righteous is He, the Lord, He hewed asunder the ropes of the wicked." (Psalm cxxix.)—Full often have the enemies said: "Come let us pull down the city of Zion; let us destroy the temple on Moriah; let us blot out the Hebrews from amidst nations;" but they strove against One mightier far than all human power; One, wiser far than all the wisdom of men; and they failed, as fail they must, in their enterprise, and were overwhelmed with confusion, when every thing seemed to yield before the oppressor's power. I am not going to dilate upon our miraculous deliverance from Egypt; not upon the victory of Deborah over Sisserah; not upon the slaughter of Senaherib's host; not upon the return of the captives under Ezra and Zerubbabel; but I will only speak of the occasion of the festival of the Dedication חנכה which we celebrate this day. In the outset, let me remark, that never was a more entire confidence in God, or a more heroic self-devotion, displayed at any period of our national existence, than at the time of the brave family of the Asmoneans.—The Jews who had returned from Babylon, by the express permission of the Persian king, Cyrus, lived safely and peaceably in their own land for many years, secured from foreign danger by the protection of the powerful Persians, and in domestic peace, because they were guided by the word of God, and administered the holy law according to its letter and spirit. But at the downfal of the Persian monarchy, Alexander of Macedon became master of Judæa, and after his death, it first fell to the share of one, then to that of another of his successors, till at last it remained with the king of Syria. It was about this time, that the philosophy of the Grecians exercised a very pernicious influence over some of our nations, who wished, foolishly, to be freed from the strict and, to them, burthensome regulations of the Jewish law; and, with regret, it must be confessed, that so great was the degeneracy of the people, that there could be found a man, who by bribery induced the cruel Antiochus Epiphanes, more properly called Epimanes, signifying the madman, to dispossess the virtuous Onias from the sacred office of high priest; and having thus shown his contempt for the dignity he unworthily coveted, he exchanged his name of Joshua for the Greek one of Jason, imagining, perhaps, to acquire more of the favour of the tyrant the more he assimilated to the ruling nation, even as regards the name he bore. But as the wicked generally lay the foundation of their own ruin, so did the unworthy priest of whom we are speaking; for a relative of his own, by the name of Onias, who had assumed the Grecian name of Menelaus, overbid him with the fickle despot, who accordingly dismissed Jason and installed Menelaus in Aaron's holy office. How great must have been the wickedness of those days, when the station, which had been intended as the portion of the wisest and best of all the servants of the altar, was sold by an alien to our blood, for money; and the more so, as the sacred vessels of the temple were purloined to pay the bribe, and as the virtuous Onias was slaughtered, because he dared in holy and honest indignation to raise his voice against the sacrilege. Deeds of such unexampled impiety were but too well calculated to bring all the sacred ordinances of the law into disrepute, since the people at large could not help looking down with deserved contempt upon ministers stained with so many vices; and there was, therefore, great danger that the community might be induced to throw off that worship, which they saw administered by men whom they were forced to regard with aversion for their misconduct, with jealousy too, at finding elevated so much above them men who were evidently not entitled to this elevation by a superior degree of moral excellence.—To increase this danger arising from a general laxity of principles, persecution added its terrors. For when Antiochus had gone to subjugate Egypt to his power, and it being reported that he had died, Jason endeavoured to repossess himself of the dignity of high-priest, which he had lost, as said already, by the treachery of Menelaus, and having obtained possession of his person he shut him up in the fortress of Acra. But Antiochus was not dead; and hearing of the revolt of Jason, he construed it into a rebellion of the whole people; he therefore marched against Jerusalem, and butchered, without remorse or pity, tens of thousands of the helpless inhabitants, and sold tens of thousands of free-born men into slavery. Yet even this excess of cruelty did not satisfy this barbarous heathen king; for superadded to his deeds of blood, he now began a war against the religion of the Lord; he pillaged the temple, and desecrated the holy altar, by commanding a swine to be sacrificed upon it, there, where naught but offerings agreeable to our Father were to be brought, where none but the righteous sons of Aaron were ever to officiate. Imagine to yourselves the horror which must have seized those Israelites who loved their God with all their heart, at seeing the desecration of whatever was the holiest of all things on earth: and then picture to yourselves, how grieved they must have been, when finding that they had not the power to avert the evil, nor the strength to avenge themselves on their insolent oppressors. Though so much blood had already been shed, Antiochus's thirst for slaughter was not stilled; and he made the occasion of a defeat he suffered from the Romans a pretext for farther oppression of the Jews; and in fact he determined to exterminate the whole race. The tyrant found a ready instrument in one Apollonius, who, whilst the whole people were engaged in peaceful worship on a Sabbath-day in the city consecrated to the service of God, ordered his soldiers to fall upon the unresisting and defenceless multitude; and fearfully did the slaughter rage, for all the *males* were slain, till the streets were red with the streaming gore of uncounted victims, and the women were reserved for a more cruel fate even, for they were led away as captives into hopeless slavery. Apollonius next broke down the walls of the city, pillaged it and set fire to it in many places; and to curb the indignant spirit of a brave people, he built a fortress on the highest part of Mount Zion, to keep the city and temple under perpetual exposure from his irruptions. Thus the enemy silenced the voice of the holy worship, made the sacrifices cease, and cast the whole house of Israel, that yet remained, in mourning. As if not enough had yet been done, Antiochus commanded now, that all his subjects should conform to one mode of worship.—He prohibited the covenant of Abraham, interdicted the observance of the Sabbath, compelled many to eat the flesh of the swine, and, most horrible! a statue of an idol was, by his orders, erected on the altar of burnt-offerings, where the heathens then worshipped in the place of God's chosen priests!—Yet even this bitter persecution had its happy effects upon the Jews. Please to remember, brethren, what has been just said, that the philosophy and manners of the Grecians, who had obtained the mastery over all the countries bordering on Palestine, were beginning to be the cause of fearful apostacies; so much so indeed that, as we have seen, two men, who possessed the dignity of high-priest, bought their offices from heathens, adopted heathen names, and introduced such customs, as were entirely opposed to the retired and virtuous mode of life so strongly recommended by the Bible. We may, therefore, regard it as a special miracle, that the Jews were made to feel the tender mercies of the heathens, whose manners they had begun to adopt, and they could thus easily distinguish between the effects which the benign and tolerant precepts of the Mosaic code were intended to produce, and the consequences of the destructive and intolerant systems of paganism. There was now, moreover, an opportunity offered to those yet firm and true to their God, to display their constancy; and we must look back with a religious satisfaction upon the unflinching resignation of the martyrs, who suffered the most excruciating torments, rather than offend against the will of God. Well known is the history of Hannah's seven sons; also the noble resistance of the aged Eleazer, who embraced a glorious death, to teach the young how to die willingly in the defence of the holy law, when life can be purchased only by dishonouring it.—Thus, the ancient spirit of the people began to revive, amidst the persecutions which now had spread all over the country, like the elastic bow that recoils the more forcibly, the stronger it has been bent; and it was this spirit of virtue and bold defiance of the oppressor's power, which was made the instrument of Divine Providence for preserving the remnant of Israel from the fell sword of the idolater. There lived in the town of Modin an aged man by the name of Mattathias, son of Yochanan, the high-priest, famed for virtue and an ardent zeal for his religion, and father of five sons, worthy of such a parent; their names were, Yochanan, Simon, Judas, Eleazer, and Yonathan. It happened about this time, that an officer of Antiochus, Apelles, arrived at Modin, to enforce the king's decrees against the Jewish religion. It was of course to be expected, that a man of Mattathias's standing was to be brought over to the cause of idolatry by offers the most tempting; for then, as in later times, our adversaries thought it justifiable to bribe us into apostacy, when open force or persuasion would not succeed. But the venerable sage would not listen to the insidious proposals; he proclaimed aloud, that the faith which his fathers had acknowledged, was the one to which he would firmly adhere to the moment of his dissolution; nay, he even set the example of open resistance, as he slew, in the moment of holy zeal, an apostate Jew, who was going to sacrifice to the idol; and in addition, the messenger of Antiochus fell by his hands. The sacred work once begun, he summoned the citizens to follow him, and in the mountain fastness they organized themselves; and rapidly the numbers of defenders increased; and with prudence and unflinching courage they conducted their heroic enterprise, and they proceeded to overturn the heathen altars in many places, to enforce the observance of the law, and to re-establish the provincial places of meeting for public worship (the Synagogues), whilst the temple was yet in the hands of the Grecians. Mattathias had the happiness to behold the prosperous progress of the work of regeneration, and, crowned with immortal glory, he resigned the command to his son Judas, after which the aged warrior sunk into the arms of death, and was interred in his native city, Modin.

Judas, surnamed the Maccabee, was a successor worthy of his glorious parent, and he initiated his warriors by many a gallant deed of arms, by surprising fortified places and garrisoning them; and in this manner he secured to himself places of retreat in case of any misadventure. Having thus trained his small army, he at length advanced against the proud and confiding enemy in the open field, where he was met by Apollonius, governor of Samaria, whom he conquered and slew. Seron, another general of Antiochus, shared the same fate in a battle which he fought against Judas, to revenge the death of Apollonius. But Antiochus was not willing that the despised Jews should so easily regain their independence; he therefore sent an immense host to extinguish the people, whose laws he hated, and whose power he esteemed lightly. Nicanor, then, and Gorgias, and Ptolemy Macron, advanced against the feeble army of Judas with an army of forty thousand foot and seven thousand horse; and in their train followed a great number of slave-merchants, who were to purchase as many of the Israelites as should be made captives, in order that their price should furnish the king with means to pay the arrears of the tribute due to the Romans. Vain imagination! for no booty, nor captives fell into their hands; but, overwhelmed with confusion, they were compelled to fly before the handful of those who shed their blood in the cause of God. Judas had assembled six thousand men at Mitzpah, a city famed for the victory achieved over the Philistines, in former times, by the prophet Samuel, through his intercession with God for the then equally oppressed people. According to the ancient and hallowed custom the men under Judas fasted here, and prayed fervently for protection from above, in their almost hopeless situation; and though his army was barely an eighth part of the Syrian host, Judas nevertheless made proclamation in obedience to the Mosaic law, that every one who had built a house, planted a vineyard, espoused a woman, or was afraid to meet the foe, should return home; and in consequence, but three thousand remained with the hero, to combat the forty-seven thousand of the enemy. But every breast of this little band was a fortified tower, and the enemy dared not hope to march to victory, but over the prostrate bodies of every one of the fearless defenders of the righteous cause. By a series of masterly manœuvres Judas overcame the troops of Gorgias, who were compelled to seek safety in flight. But in their success, the Jews did not forget the Disposer of all human events, and the following day, being Sabbath, they rested and returned their heartfelt thanks to our heavenly Father.—Another victory was soon after gained over another great army of the Syrians, in the country beyond Jordan; in consequence of which Nicanor, he who had advised that the *slave-dealers* should follow the army, was compelled to fly to Antioch, disguised as a *slave*—strange retribution, but how just! In the following year, Lysias, who had been appointed by the king to exterminate the Hebrew people, advanced with sixty thousand foot and five thousand horse, to which immense force Judas was able to oppose but ten thousand men; and yet he triumphed; for what could resist those, who did not fight for fame, nor wealth, but solely for the honour of their violated faith, and under the especial protection of the Almighty? It was after this battle that Judas was enabled to regain the desolate ruins of Jerusalem; but oh! who can paint the anguish of the people, when they found shrubs growing in the courts of the temple, and saw the walls of the sacred edifice defaced, and were conscious that every thing had been profaned by the unclean hands of the pagans? But they instantly commenced the work of purification, re-installed the expelled priests, rebuilt the altar, replaced the sacred vessels, which had been taken, out of the spoils which had fallen into their hands, and they celebrated the feast of *Dedication* for eight days, amidst universal rejoicing and thanksgiving. It is said that, as they re-entered the temple, they found that all the oil appropriated for the service had been defiled by the Syrians, except one cruet, sealed with the seal of the high-priest, which, however, contained only enough for one day's supply. You must know that, according to the twenty-seventh chapter of Exodus and the twenty-fourth of Leviticus, the oil for the service of the temple was to be pure, and especially destined for the purpose. It now came to pass, that the oil found in the cruet lasted for eight days, till a fresh supply could be procured. In commemoration of this, we light the Hanuckah lamps in all our dwellings, during the eight days of the festival of Consecration, which we are this day celebrating.

It is needless to pursue farther the account of the victories of the valiant Maccabee, as history, accessible to you all, has furnished us a detail of the facts. I only intended to sketch, as briefly as possible, the origin of the eight days of Hanuckah, and to point out to you the wonderful occurrences connected with them. We have seen how the heathens triumphed, how they satiated their fierce revenge, and how they glutted their desire for blood, whilst the trespasses of a great portion of the people justly devoted them to the vengeance denounced in the law. Again it has been shown, how the subsequent persecutions gave to the noble-minded amongst us an opportunity of proving how much they valued the sacred inheritance derived from their ancestors, and how gladly they resigned all, when life and security could be purchased only at the price of apostacy.—We have it also proved, how utterly unavailing were all the artifices of the foe to extirpate the religious feelings of the Jews by all the means which his cruelty could devise, and how he was overcome, and his great armies conquered, by the few who remained true to the belief of their ancestors.—Let us reflect—was this not a glorious proof of the Divine protection—when the nation of Israel was preserved by apparently so inadequate physical means from amalgamating with the heathens on the one hand, and extermination by countless swarms of warriors on the other?—Well might Israel say: "Full often have enemies pressed me hard from my youth, yet they did not overcome me; for the righteous Lord hewed asunder the ropes of the wicked." And so it ever was. Age after age has looked with a jealous eye on the insignificant numbers of the Hebrews, and no artifice has been left untried to inveigle them to apostacy; yet the Jews remain a people before the Lord. The sword of persecution has been often unsheathed, but gladly did millions of victims stretch out their necks to receive the death-stroke, and sealed with their life's blood their attachment to One God! The stake was kindled, and the children of Yeshurun were promised life and honour, if they would but swerve from their belief in a single article; but they exclaimed: "The Lord our God is the only Eternal Being!" and hastened into the embrace of a cruel death, as though they were hurrying to a great festival. Victim after victim was led forth, yet thousands were still ready to follow the holy example!—It is not to be denied, that human passions, unconnected with any thing sacred, may stimulate multitudes to sacrifice themselves for the sake of some cherished opinion. But where is that people which has suffered, with so much constancy as the Jews have done, the contumely of nations, the hatred of sovereigns, the derision of the worthless? Is this not suffering the rack and death in every man, in every woman, in every child of the people? And then let us consider, how steadfastly all was borne, how nobly we submitted to all, and to every one, of the many vexations in defence of the best gift of Heaven! And instead of advancing the political influence of their caste, as may have been the case with martyrs for other systems, the Israelites that died for their religion never could hope for such a result; for there was no contest waged for superiority, there was no prospect of their death being avenged by their friends; for alas! our nation has been powerless for tens of centuries, and none but He above can be looked to as the avenger of the innocent blood. Besides the number of their followers could not be augmented by their heroic suffering; for we do not look for an outward increase, till the time of the Lord arrives; and, if any thing, their example would draw the line of separation more broadly, and confine our people to their own members exclusively, as to a certainty the strict adherence of our martyred ones was nowise calculated to invite strangers, who had followed an easier and freer law, to the adoption of the Mosaic system. None, therefore, but the most prejudiced can deny, that the sacrifice of so many useful lives proves, that the Israelites conceived the law to be vital to their existence, that they considered the mingling with the mass of mankind, and coalescing with the nations, as a calamity to be avoided even at the expense of life; and consequently, as universal principles of right cannot be changed by circumstances and time, it must farther be conceded, that at the present day too we are bound to follow their footsteps in so far as to maintain, at all hazards, the precepts and the supremacy of the code of Moses.

Yet it may be urged, although without much reason, that vigilance is not any longer called for, since, at the present moment, all persecution has ceased, since now Israel is no more exposed to hatred for opinion's sake, since the nations of the earth regard us with a more favourable eye, and since the bonds of thraldom are broken; and that therefore we may at the present day freely join with those around us, throw off antiquated customs, more suited to a less enlightened age, and assimilate in manners and in the language of public worship to the people among whom we live. In fact such reasoning would go far to break down the uniformity of rule and language which has hitherto, and for so long a period, prevailed among the Jews. But hear me, brethren, hear me you who are descended from the patriarchs, and remark what I say, that this very state of fancied security is the most hurtful to our independence as a religious community. Understand me, I do not say, that we should, even if we could, separate our interests from those of the nations under whose protection we so happily enjoy security, under whose shadow we advance so firmly in the path of science and the noble unfolding of the mind; for we are commanded by God, through the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah, "to seek the peace of the city in which we live;" and it has accordingly always been our custom, in every country where we were permitted to rest for a while to recruit our strength and to refresh our weary limbs, to pray for the welfare of the government and the administrators of justice. Nevertheless, a sense of duty now demands of me to admonish you, my brethren, to beware of losing sight of the holy law, through which alone you can prosper. Think you, that because there is no actual persecution, we are therefore safe from all attacks? Is there no cause for firmly maintaining the law, since no crusades are preached up against us? Alas! candour and truth compel me and every thinking man to say, that only the weapons have been changed, but that the system itself is yet the same it was more than three thousand years ago, when Pharaoh endeavoured to repress the growth of the Israelites by hard labour! Believe me, brethren, that the Jew, as such, is an object of hatred and even contempt to almost every other individual of the human family. The infidel, who is regardless of every system of religion, will ridicule you for observing precepts which he avers to be founded in error; and the zealot for any other of the systems under which men live will pity you for being nothing but blind Jews, even if your acts are such as every one must acknowledge to be the most laudable; the most worthy of our people are commiserated for belonging to no better people than the Jews, as though there could be a name more honourable for antiquity and virtue, or any nation in possession of more elevated maxims of piety than the Jewish people! The consequences of this spirit of intolerance show themselves from time to time in the efforts which are made to bring the Jews to apostacy, either by direct bribes, or by inducements that offices and honourable preferment should be given as the price for an outward change of faith. Add to this, that the courtesy now shown us has unfortunately induced too many already to relax from the severity of the burdens of the law; and by mixing too freely with other nations some have learned and adopted their manners, and occasionally we witness an entire family* leaving the apparently austere precepts of Moses, and joining themselves to the more easy systems of others. Is not this a state which demands the serious attention of every Jew, who is so in sincerity? Have not our enemies predicted, that in the course of a century the Jewish name would die away in the countries where we enjoy freedom and affluence, by gradually amalgamating with the nations amongst whom we reside? Are the Israelites willing to contribute with all their might to the fulfilment of this libellous prediction? Shall indeed the day arrive, when it may be said with truth—"Israel has ceased to be?" I, for my part, fear not that anything of the kind will ever take place; for the Almighty will (according to his promise) avert the danger in his own good time, and, just as in the days of the Maccabees, persecution will ensue as a punishment for our transgressions, to teach us that we have incurred the displeasure of Heaven, if security will make us forgetful of our duty. And have we not examples innumerable that persecution or banishment always followed in the train of a relaxation from the observance of the law? Why then will you, avoiding the fellowship of your brethren, imitate and flatter people, whose opinions and yours ought never to become alike by a surrender of your own principles? and what is more, why should you think of doing an acknowledged evil, when all your endeavours to effect it will and must utterly fail? And think you, that persecution will never more raise its head? Imagine you, that the state of advancement which many nations have reached in civilization will for ever preclude the recurrence of the scenes witnessed from the barbarity of the Inquisition? We should pray to Heaven that this might be so; but still we cannot rest in perfect security, whilst we are regardless of the duties to our God. It seems fatal to us Jews to depart therefrom, and during the whole of our existence we have ever found, that those nations even that were, from the nature of their worship, friendly to every system of polytheism, always regarded with aversion, and persecuted too very often the followers of One God; so that concessions will on the one hand draw down upon us the just indignation of Divine Providence, and will not on the other gain for us the paltry favour of the gentiles, even if it could in the slightest degree be valued against the positive loss we incur by offending the Lord. Menelaus, when he purloined the sacred vessels of the temple, no doubt thought that the purchase of the office of high-priest through sacrilege from the heathens would have no evil consequences; the people of those days perhaps imagined, that the imitation of the customs of the Greeks, which favoured the pursuit of pleasure so much more than the retired manners of the Jews, would produce only the happiest result: and yet we have seen, in the brief sketch just given, how near these same causes brought the children of Israel to the very brink of extirpation. Let this then operate as a solemn admonition on all who may feel inclined to yield the strict discipline of the Mosaic law; for (let me repeat it) by this alone we can be safe! Do you think that the injunction against the marrying of persons who are not Jews is a mere arbitrary precept? Do you think, that the forbidden meats, and the strict attention to be given to those that are allowed, are mere superstitious ordinances? Credit me, brethren, that both and similar other laws are the very safeguard of our existence; and that it is the very distance which the strict observance of our rules interposes between us and others, which has so miraculously preserved us entire during so many ages of darkness and oppression. And shall it be said, that we threw off the burden of the law, as soon as we could find a convenient opportunity to do so? May that be the last day of peace to Israel, when this shall be true; may punishment upon punishment again be poured out to teach us the way of righteousness, and may the bitterness of wormwood and the cup of wrath again be presented to our lips, until we return and seek the Lord. Brethren! let me call upon you to consider well your relation to your Maker; and let the reflection, which must be awakened within you on this day, devoted to the celebration of the service of the Lord restored by your ancestors, and of their exertions made in defence of the righteous faith, stimulate you to imitate, as far as lies within your power, their noble example of self-devotion. They left their homes, they relinquished the pleasures of a city life, the enjoyment of domestic happiness, in short every thing that renders life agreeable, and resorted to mountain fastnesses, and there exposed their lives hourly to the most imminent peril. Be it then also your study to deny to yourselves those pleasures, to abstain from those enjoyments, to avoid those meetings, which run counter to the letter and spirit of our law; for in this careful abstinence only can you, in these days of allurement and general intercourse, preserve in purity the blessed legacy of your forefathers. All this can also be accomplished without the least illiberality towards your friends of another belief. Love them as yourselves, assist them in their necessities, administer comfort to them when they are afflicted, watch over them when they are sick, clothe their naked ones, feed their hungry, and bury their dead; for this universal love is demanded of you by the God who benignantly watches over all his creatures. Nay more, you must not pride yourselves at being Jews, nor despise others for being less enlightened in the true religion; but only be thankful, that it pleased the Almighty to make you his own people. Condemn no man for his belief, for you cannot know to whom the Lord may have decreed deserved happiness. Besides all this, you should never attempt—if not in defence of your own principles—to weaken any man's belief in his received opinions, nor try to undermine any general custom, unless you find the one or the other injurious to the peace of society at large, for to this you are bound to contribute whatever you may be able to effect. Such a system as this is certainly not one founded upon illiberality, nor based upon superstition and bigotry; and acting up to it moreover will in nowise tend to abstract you in the least from your religion, for the strictest observance of the Bible can be coupled with universal philanthropy; and, let me add, that no true religion has taken root in the heart of him who looks from inward pride, over his own superiority, with contempt upon his fellow-men. On the other hand the affected fear which some feel to acknowledge their being Jews is truly ridiculous. For why should you be afraid to avow your attachment to Judaism? Why should the dread of ridicule deter you from doing those duties which ages of persecutions and hardships endeared to your ancestors? There are doubtless some among my hearers, who are descended from those glorious martyrs who suffered but recently all the terrors and pains which a bigoted priesthood, working upon a superstitious and ignorant populace, could invent. If then the children of these martyrs are here, let them reflect for what purpose their progenitors suffered; and let them act as becomes children of such parents, by following the dictates of that law which they acknowledged up to the moment of their being taken hence, when they were relieved from those severe tortures, which their bodies were no longer able to endure! You, who have come hither from a foreign land, perhaps for the sake of escaping the odium attached in many countries to our name, show by your devotion to the holy law, in a land where you are at liberty to worship your God in the manner He commanded you without fear of interruption, that you are deserving of all the favours which can be bestowed on mortals. And you, who were born in this country, who never felt the want of liberty of conscience, reflect that every Israelite, even the one who bears the insult and maltreatment of some African or Asiatic despot, is your brother, and that you owe obedience to the same law which guides him, and in defence of which he is perchance suffering imprisonment and stripes, whilst you walk at large in ease and affluence!

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* In thus stating my opinion, I do not mean a public embracing of other tenets only, but also such acts as place the agents or their descendants beyond the pale of the Jewish Church, such as intermarriage with gentiles, and a total neglect of the law.

I am afraid that I have detained you too long already upon this subject; but I thought the present occasion one every way proper to communicate to you the occurrences of olden times, and the reflections which naturally flow from their consideration.

I hope that the lesson taught by the wonderful event detailed to you will sink deeply in your hearts, and that you may ever be animated by a holy zeal, be ever ready to meet every danger, rather than transgress the will of God. If you should sacrifice property and life even in this cause, you may rest assured that the everlasting Father can and will compensate you a thousand-fold for every suffering and privation; and remember that—"The name of the Lord is a strong tower to which the righteous runneth and is protected."

May the protection of the Almighty be always extended over you, and may you, living in his fear, be ever exempt from all suffering and trouble. Amen.

Kislev 22d.
December 8th. } 5591.

DISCOURSE XII.

THE FEAR OF LOSS.

Lord of the Universe, from whom all blessings, which every being enjoys, emanate, bless us in thy grace, and bestow on us the choicest gifts of thy goodness and bounty, and grant, that each and every one of thy children be able to acquire a maintenance, without needing the assistance of one another, or that of a foreign people; so that they may, living by thy bounty solely, devote their lives to thy service. Amen.

BRETHREN!

Among the causes which tend to withhold man from the pursuit of religion, the fear of incurring temporal loss stands preëminent, especially if his circumstances should compel him to seek his bread by daily labour. Such a one will refuse to rest on the Sabbath, under the plea that he is unable to pretermit his work one or two days every week, since his unremitted toil will barely furnish him with a livelihood. He acts and speaks as though it were his exertions, aided by his ingenuity, which could secure him against want; he forgets his dependence on a higher Power, and he places not an undivided confidence in Providence, who "in giving life," as our wise men express it, "will also provide food." And if you speak to one of this class about his religious duties, he will tell you, that his circumstances forbid his observing them; that an attendance at the house of God would expose him to too great a loss of time and money; others more favoured than he may find it convenient to give charity and to assist the poor, but that he ought to be exempt from the burthen of troubling himself about other people's wants. He will not, however, confess, even to himself, that there is aught blame-worthy in his conduct; for he almost invariably flatters himself with the opinion, that God will not look with displeasure upon one who honestly endeavours to pursue his calling, and withholds not from the humblest individual his just dues. And should a man, like this, even say, that he will do better when his circumstances improve, it is highly probable that this period will never arrive; for if he should amass uncounted wealth, and be blessed with whatever his heart desires, he will still find a new set of excuses to suit his more improved condition; and death may close his life, before he has arranged, much less carried into execution, the proposed plans for his self-amelioration. This eagerness for wealth, and this fear of being poor have been a prevailing cause of much irreligion at all times, and our daily experience teaches us, that many, alas! yield all their energies to the obtainment of the coveted worldly blessings; and though often advised of the nothingness of gold, though exhorted to seek for higher riches, the race for aggrandizement is still pursued by the many,—the path of real virtue trod by but few devoted spirits. I may, therefore, be asked, What is the good to be derived from public exhortations—what effect can a moralist look for from telling the world of their failings? Or, I may be told that as the sinner will do as he pleases, and as it is needless to provoke his resentment, it were much better to let every one pursue his own way, without attempting to interfere with him. To all these and similar objections against the utility of public addresses in our places of worship, I wish to put in the following plea, trusting that the candid will see therein a perfect justification of the task I have, though unusual at present among us, voluntarily assumed, and in which I hope to be able to persevere with the blessing of Heaven. I know full well, that there is no mode of convincing any one of the necessity of being a strict Israelite, if the sacred volume does not speak to his heart, if he does not feel in his inmost soul, that every precept it contains is obligatory upon him in consequence of its being an edict of the Supreme

Wisdom; moreover it is no secret to me, that but little favour can be gained by the exposition of any fault to which a community or any member thereof may be addicted. Yet do I think it my duty to teach fearlessly what our law says concerning the neglect of the divine precepts, be the cause sordid avarice or forgetfulness of our obligations to God; hoping to be able at least to rouse a spirit of reflection in some, if I cannot even convince all of the justness of the views, which, as an Israelite, I honestly entertain; and trusting that my feeble admonitions may be made the instrument of bringing back, one day (though none of us may live to see it) a few to the pale of our holy faith: and should this even not come to pass, to make the memory of those glorious men more respected, who have gone down to the tomb, after having all their lives adhered strictly, and paid unflinching obedience, to the statutes which were handed down as an inheritance to the congregation of Jacob. Whilst on the subject let me state in this place, once for all, that no allusion shall ever be made to any person in particular, as *manners* and not *men* are alone fit subjects for our inquiries; but at the same time, sins shall always be condemned, no matter who the sinners are. This much I would desire you to bear in mind that, as I deem personalities unfit to be introduced in moral lectures, and as any such allusions should be carefully avoided, nothing whatever, that I may have to advance in the course of the addresses I may make to you, should be looked upon in a light as though I were desirous to harrow up, wantonly, the feelings of any one of my hearers. If any there are, to whom a portion of what is said should happen to apply; if they so feel it within themselves: let them—not blame the preacher who is anxious for their improvement—but ponder well on the doctrines advanced; let the admonitions be the means of causing them to search well into their conduct; of noting every, or any particular act of their life; and if they find themselves in the wrong, let them mend their course speedily, whilst yet the vigour of youth or the strength of manhood remains; whilst yet they have the mastery over their inclinations; before decrepid old age, or long-indulged vicious habits have made sin their second nature; before the forgetfulness of all moral obligation has nearly extinguished all hopes of amendment.—This short explanation I conceived to be necessary, fearing lest some persons might take offence or exception against an inadvertently uttered thought spoken without viewing previously all the bearings my hearers might give to it. I, therefore, now solemnly declare, that any imputation or inference, as though I intended to give offence wilfully to any human being, is entirely unfounded; since I would think myself debased, were I to use my station as a public teacher, to carry malice towards any one of my hearers into the house dedicated to the service of God.

Having said, accidentally, thus much on the scope of my intended remarks, let us resume the subject with which we commenced. It was stated that the fear of temporary loss is one of the chief causes, which render men irreligious. It is therefore proper, that we trace this fear, and endeavour to show its futility, and to prove that, if even it be well founded, there are a thousand other considerations which should prevent us from ever allowing it to influence our conduct.—The wavering man, or he who has already thrown off the burden of restraint which religion must of necessity impose—since faith merely, without acts, is not the religion of the Israelites—will always require some other than mere spiritual advantages to incite him to practise religious obligations, or in other words, one who is not convinced of the necessity and paramount obligation of the law of God will rarely, if ever, appear religious unless his worldly advantages are actually, or expected to be, augmented thereby. These may consist, in an actual accession of wealth, the name of a thorough-good man, or the fear of public censure. If one pretends to piety from the two first motives, he is a hypocrite, since he does that for gain or fame which has not a sufficiently strong hold on his conviction, to be viewed as a duty; with the last-mentioned motive, however, the fear of censure, a man may not be totally lost to all holy sensations, as the fear he entertains of men may preserve him, perhaps, from doing any thing absolutely wrong, even in secret; since the habit of practising the good publicly may, by degrees, teach him to dispense with the evil altogether, and if this should not be entirely so, it may be calculated on at least to a considerable extent. Persons of this kind, pious from fear, can only be found in communities where the majority are in truth and without ostentation, devoted to the observance of the law; for unless one is actually debased at heart, he will readily join in with his fellows, although he be not persuaded of the absolute necessity of their conduct. The hypocrite too, will commonly make his appearance, where the many are religious, though amongst a community of irreligious persons too he may assume the outward show of sanctity, the better to conceal his wickedness, till his ends be obtained.—But, generally speaking, if a man not absolutely convinced of the truth of revelation is placed where his interest would be better subserved by disregarding the divine precepts, we shall find, that he will seek his worldly gain as paramount to every other consideration; and the hypocrite, as well as the pious from habit merely, will then disregard his former practices; and the one from wantonness, the other from apprehension of loss, will leave religion unnoticed as something which has no claim to his attention.—To one, who assumes the garb of religion only to forward his plans of wickedness, or to promote his interest, but little can be said to awaken his mind to a review of his conduct, unless we could demonstrate to him, that punishment will, to a certainty and inevitably, follow from above as the consequence of sin, even if no human vengeance should ever be exerted against his crimes. Yet, this is almost impossible to prove to the obdurate; for tell him that the book of God has so recorded it, and he will ridicule that openly, which he disbelieves secretly; tell him of examples, even those which have come under your own observation, and he will say, that it was all the effect of chance, and that you were misled by the coincidence merely to suppose it the work of a special Providence; madman! as though the actual occurrence of these strange coincidences from time to time did not prove in the strongest manner the existence and the exercise of an especial watchfulness by the Creator!—Therefore, to him who neglects to obey God's word from a feeling of contempt towards it, or to him who uses it merely as an outward cloak, we shall not at present address ourselves; but we will only turn to him, who is neglectful of his religion from an actual apprehension of too great a loss, and upon whom public opinion has not influence enough to make him pursue the path of righteousness.

Fallen brother! thou fearest to suffer loss by obeying thy God; thou weenest, that thou art bound to endeavour to shield thyself against want, even at the expense of the duties thou owest to thy Maker; perhaps thou art, at this very moment, striving to convince thyself by false and specious excuses, that thou violatest no immutable and eternal principle of right by thy present conduct! But thou errest; thou lookest upon the confused outlines merely, which thy imperfect vision presents to thee, of the real state of existence, and hence arises thy mistaking the false for the true—the unimportant for the vitally essential—and the means for the object!—Yes, brethren and friends, it is only by this misplacing the unholy in the room of the holiest thing in existence, that a man can desire temporal goods in preference to being religious, and that sordid avarice can, as it were, push the unwary wanderer into the abyss of eternal destruction, which yawns unseen beneath his feet.—In the first place, let us view the real extent of the apprehended temporal loss, by which is generally understood, the not-acquiring or not-retaining of as much money, or that for which money can be obtained, as another of our fellow-men has acquired, or is in process of obtaining. Those now disposed to transgress aver, that their business must suffer if they are strict in the observance of our laws; because so many days must be spent in idleness, which could be profitably employed; and so much capital must be laid out in charity, the Synagogue and the support of religion in general, which brings no return whatever. But this is evidently an empty excuse, since so many who were good Jews from their infancy; who never profaned the day of rest; who never suffered the hungry to go from their doors unfed; who never permitted the naked to remain unclothed; who never neglected to pay the duties which our holy law demands to be exercised towards the sick and dead—I say, pious men are not necessarily doomed to indigence, since so many of them have risen from an humble beginning to immense affluence and distinction! What then is there in all these things to deter us from practising them? Nothing—but our own idle fears,—nothing but hateful envy at the success of a neighbour, which causes us to strain every nerve to become of equal importance with him in the arbitrary scale of rank, which the vain, the conceited, and the ignorant have always been at so great pains to establish.—It is, moreover, by no means ascertained, even to the satisfaction of the transgressors themselves, that their wealth is actually augmented, or their standing in society raised by their irreligious practices; and yet the few examples of transgressors becoming rich or respectable are constantly held up as excuses for others to do likewise, as though they could prove that the ways of sin are pleasant, when the unreasonableness of such argument must be self-evident.—But let us now for one moment grant that the object in view, the pursuit of wealth and fame, can be best attained in the way of sin, what then at best is the ultimate gain?—Riches! Honour!—O God! that these baubles should be powerful enough to mislead so many unthinking, and some even reflecting, minds! Riches?—If those in humble circumstances were but to know how much gilded misery there is existing—if they could but once look at the true nature of wealth, masked by a fair appearance—if they could but once be convinced, that no real satisfaction is ever obtained by the possession of the utmost desires of the imagination:—they would assuredly cease to crave so inordinately that which is once for all beyond their reach; and those treasures, which the All-wise Dispenser has denied them, would then assuredly remain unsought.—Riches? Yes, look at that man, who has become great by the success of his business; gold and silver are his in plenty, houses, fields, slaves, and cattle he possesses: and yet has he enough?—no, his toil is the same as it was years ago, when he was miserably poor, for his grovelling nature knows not how to be contented, his avarice is not yet satisfied, and he will hardly allow himself or his family any of the indulgencies which wealth can purchase, not because he dislikes such enjoyments, but only because he is afraid they will impoverish him, that is, diminish his hoard to some small extent.—Riches? Oh, name not the delusive word with the fervour with which it is generally pronounced; for riches are but the empty shadow, the deceiving light, which vanish whilst you grasp them, which are ineffectual when you lean on them for support. And although short my number of years, and not extensive my experience, I have seen that which must have called up thought in the most thoughtless, had he too witnessed it. It was once that I was summoned to the dying bed of a rich man—he lay an object of commiseration, such an object as would have moved the heart of the most unfeeling with pity; his foaming mouth, his lack-lustre eyes evidently betokened him a speedy food for worms, and the wretched appointments of his couch seemed to say, that his labours for gold had been for others, not for himself; and what availed him his riches? nothing—for to alleviate his dreadful sufferings merely,—to smooth for him the descent to death—was beyond the power of all medical skill, and the leveller only of all human distinctions was able to relieve him from his misery—misery of which he himself was unconscious, for the latter years of his life had been shrouded in total mental darkness.—And is it for this, that we should never cease from labour? is this the noble end for which all our faculties should be exerted? is there nothing else besides for which we are to live?—I grant, that if our existence—our life—our being—were limited to the brief threescore-and-ten—the short span of our days on earth—it would be unwise to check the counsel of cupidity, if this cupidity were strong enough to make us believe that, if blest with money, we should have in our possession the highest good we are capable of attaining. But how stands the case, if we take the light of revelation to examine thereby the dark intricacies of human life? We are there told, that the soul does not die, that the human spirit is a portion breathed into man as a living undying spark, in fact, that the real essence of man is not composed of dust and matter, and that this essence, this spark divine, is to be rewarded or punished according as the deeds done in the flesh may render it worthy or unworthy in the sight of the righteous Judge in heaven, before whom no concealment is possible, before whose unerring wisdom no false excuses can avail. Why then, should we be so insatiable after wealth? can it plead our justification on the day of judgment? will it open to us the gates of heaven, if it has only been acquired to be hoarded up to uncounted thousands? Wo! wo! on the silly delusion that can blind a rational being to such an extent, as to cause him to grasp at a shadow, and to exclaim madly: "I have caught the substance!"

Honour? Is this not an object worth seeking? no more than riches; for ask the student, who has been striving for academical honours, after his brow is encircled with the wreath of victory—ask him, if his idol, that which he so ardently craved, is of that great value he imagined it to be after it is gained: and he will say, that much more is yet to be desired, and that, had he known how little satisfaction he should derive from his declared superiority over his fellows, he would never have sacrificed his health at the shrine of ambition. For see, his eye is sunken; the bloom of youth which once glowed on his healthful cheek —the gay step—the manly bearing—the vigour of health—are all flown, and he has now open before him the prospect of premature decay, before yet he has had time to carry into effect one plan even of his proud ambition!—Ask the placeman, he who through a long life has basked in the sunshine of public favour, if he is blest according to his wishes: and he will answer you, that a long life of anxiety, of continual vigilance, of abuse by opponents—of insufficient aid by friends—of fear of losing the office in which one has been efficient and energetic—can never be repaid by any honours in the power of man to confer, and that only a sense of shame or pride, or perhaps necessity, produced by having long since foregone some more profitable, though more humble employment, has for many a long day been the only motive which prevented him from withdrawing into retirement.—Ask the author, whose works have been perused by admiring millions; ask the orator, the poet, and the philosopher, if the meed of praise they have received gratifies fully their morbid appetite: and you will be told, that happiness is not theirs.—Ask him, who on many an embattled plain has met the foeman with unflinching bravery; whose search for renown was ever unchecked by the fear of an instant death; whom the phantom glory led on from battlement to battlement, unswayed by opposing thousands; ask him, if the laurel crown, which covers his brow, sits easy there: and he will answer in the bitterness of his spirit, that despite of toil, of fatigue and dangers overcome, of praise and rewards heaped upon him—he is as far removed* from happiness, as on that day when he first set out, roused by his country's call, with his youthful heart beating anxiously with joy and anticipation at the prospect of glory before him.

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* A Napoleon died an exile on a distant rock in the ocean—Louis the Desired was beheaded—the restored Charles X. is an exile—and-a-Wellington, the deliverer of his country, was pelted by a mob, that once almost adored him. Are other examples needed?

These are the fruits of riches and honour,—these are the true consequences of all that man values as his highest earthly goods.—And can these be the only trophies which shall remain for us after our death, the sole memorials of our having been once here? are these the noble objects for which we are to live? were we placed here by the Deity for no other purpose? did He create us, that we should neglect all other pursuits?—It is true, that a moderate share of ambition, a due desire to possess, should be cultivated; for, whilst in this life, activity has been assigned to us by our Maker, as one of the best virtues; but as these feelings were intended for a holy purpose, we should confine them within the limits of the sacred law, and be extremely cautious, that our pursuit of wealth or renown should in nowise interfere with the duties which we primarily owe to the Creator. We should, therefore, be satisfied with the portion of riches and of honour which our honest and religious exertions can procure, and if we cannot in this manner become rich and inordinately great, we should reflect, that, as the Psalmist says:

טוב מעט לצדיק מהמון רשעים רבים׃

"Better is a little for the righteous, than the great riches of the many sinners!" Psalm xxxvii. 16.

For man can be satisfied and contented, and even more so, with a small competency, than with a large mass of wealth; for he has not then the cares of losing such great hoards to disturb him, which agitate even the wealthiest in the hour of success; for no man can be secure in his possessions against all contingencies that can arise. And again, it seldom happens, perhaps never, that good moral and religious conduct will deprive a man of his daily bread; and this is enough for necessity, more is but superfluous.—It is no doubt true, that if we are rich, we are more able to bestow charity, to relieve the sick, and to do other acts of mercy; again, if we are more honoured in the opinion of the world, we can assist the oppressed with our countenance and support better, than otherwise. All this is true; but then we should consider, that it must be wrong to commit any sin, any thing bad in the eyes of God to attain these objects of virtue; for observe, none of you is bound to give the smallest trifle in the way of charity, if he, in order to give it, would be compelled to steal it first; thus charity becomes a duty only then, when we have something to give, and if we cannot give, our Maker will not require it; for if it had been his wish that we should exert ourselves in this particular virtue, He would have given us the means, by prospering our undertakings during the periods allotted to us by Him for labour.—If we find, therefore, that we cannot become rich and renowned in the ways of religion, we should choose to live poor and unhonoured rather than transgress; for we shall then have the consciousness at least of having merited the grace of God, and this consciousness, this holy satisfaction, will calm for us the storms of life, and make joyful for us the hour of death: and are these not objects worth attaining, more than gold or silver? which should man prefer, the peace within, or the senseless glitter without?

Having thus answered the vague fears of the wavering, let us next examine, whether it is true that no immutable principle of right is encroached upon by irreligion.—Persons, determined to transgress, generally plead in the first instance, that *necessity* compels them, and in the second, that there is no harm in what they do. Now, the cases, where necessity really exists, are of very rare occurrence; but when they actually do arise, and only then, transgression may be extenuated, but never completely justified. As, however, necessity, at least absolute and unavoidable necessity, can from its very nature be of but short duration (for it would be wonderful, if a man were to be compelled by outward circumstances to act unavoidably in one way all his life or a greater portion of it): it follows, that if any thing like the transgression, done under the pressure of circumstances, be continued to be done when the pressure is wholly or in part removed, it cannot be justified under the same plea, and consequently, that which was at first excusable has now become a deed of wanton iniquity. Let us state an example: A man journeys in the wilderness with a caravan that travels on the Sabbath; if he were to remain behind by himself, it is but too probable that he would never reach the place of his destination, unless by a miracle especially wrought in his favour. This, then presents a case of necessity, and the traveller is therefore excused for not resting on the respective Sabbaths, whilst he continues in the wilderness with the caravan; but as soon as he returns home, or arrives at an inhabited country, he is obliged to rest, the necessity for the violation being no longer in existence. At the same time, it must be observed that, although the traveller in the desert is permitted to move from his place on the Sabbath, he is nevertheless not allowed to do any kind of work, since the necessity does not extend farther than to the particular act of removal.—If then, a man pleads necessity to lull his conscience, let him beware, that the imagination be not resorted to, to supply the principal features; for otherwise, his sinning will be unqualified and wilful transgression.—Secondly, as to the other excuse. When blaming the conduct of a man who is not strict in ceremonial observances, we are often met by the questions: "Do you not call him a good man? does he not pay his debts? is he not charitable? is he not, in short, careful of observing all those duties which can be called the immutable and eternal principles of religion?" You will observe here, brethren, that as long as a man is honest and charitable, he is supposed, by the general run of people, to have done all that can be demanded of him. It remains, therefore, to be inquired: "What constitutes a good man? what are the immutable principles of religion?" To these questions we answer: that a good man is he, who, in all his doings, looks to the law of God for his guide, —does not offend against either the ceremonial or moral ordinances of the same, and acts thus from motives of love and fear of God, without ostentation or worldly interest. One, who does not act up to this standard, cannot, strictly speaking, be considered in a more favourable light, than as having more or less good traits in his character; but a good man he is not.—If now there be no one, who acts altogether correctly in the majority of instances, we can with propriety call no one good, although it must be maintained, that men there are, who actually deserve the name, as far as weak mortals can ever be entitled to it.—Next, as to what are immutable truths? We answer, that every law,—every precept in the Bible, is an immutable truth in reference to an Israelite, of which he is bound to practise as much as he possibly can. If there were any difference between one precept and the other, it could be from no other reason, than that one should have proceeded from a source more eternal and more immutable than the other.—But, what *is* the fact? Evidently that all the commandments have sprung from the same source, in evidence of which I tender you the *ten commandments.* In a preceding discourse I have proved, that human wisdom, unaided by the word of God, cannot lay claim to have invented one single item of any moral law, but that all the systems which regulate civilized society have proceeded from, and are based upon the Decalogue, or, as it may be, upon revelation antecedent to the period of their promulgation. It is, therefore, unnecessary to enlarge upon the same argument again in this place, and to prove the divine authority of the law. I say, therefore, that to establish the sanctity of all the laws, I will offer you the ten commandments in evidence. There we see placed side by side: "I am the Lord thy God," with "Thou shalt not murder;" "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," with "Thou shalt not commit adultery;" "Thou shalt not bear the name of God in vain," with "Thou shalt not steal;" "Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy;" with "Thou shalt not bear false evidence;" "Honour thy father and thy mother," with "Thou shalt not covet." In this arrangement we must discover, that the Almighty did not draw the least distinction between one commandment and the other. What then confers authority upon any one of us, or even upon us all collectively, to assert, that one religious duty is more necessary than the other? Perhaps, it may be said, that the ordinances recorded on the second table are to be styled more immutable than the others, because they relate to measures necessary to preserve the peace of society; but this objection is as little founded in reason as the preceding ones. For even admit, that civil laws deserve, according to their nature, more regard than mere ceremonial laws, still it remains to be shown in what way the former can really have hold upon the public mind, if not in connexion with the service, the love and fear of God.—Consider, brethren, what makes us observe any law or regulation whatever, which lays some restraint upon our conduct,—say even the laws of etiquette—evidently, either the fear of punishment, or the expectation of reward.—Now, if we think, that one principle of the law is more binding than the other, it follows, that the infraction of the minor principle will not bring on us any evil consequence, or at worst, the punishment will be much slighter than for the non-observance of the greater duty. Let this idea once prevail, let us once imagine, that the Almighty will look with indifference or complacency upon sin of any kind, and the consequence must be, that any excuse whatever will suffice to seduce us to sin. Once tell the world, that one sin will be punished, the other not, and you make men believe that *every act* will pass unheeded of heavenly vengeance; and where there is no punishment for transgressing, there can be no reward for observing, and you thus break down every motive for piety and morality. And suppose now, that a man is in a situation, where he is next to sure, that detection is beyond probability, and that the gain to be derived from offending against what are called the laws of society counterbalances every consideration which the fear of accidental discovery can raise within him: what will operate here to restrain him from violating these very immutable laws of morality? have you not told him, or at least induced him to think, that divine vigilance need not be feared—for if this is to be feared, why should the non-observance of the Sabbath be not equally incurring God's displeasure as want of honesty—since both are spoken of in the same Decalogue? We must, therefore, conclude, relying upon the divine origin of the Mosaic code, that the laws of worship, as well as those of society, are equally holy, equally binding, and equally beneficial.—If then, we once admit, that the possession of a competency is all that is necessary for man, if we acknowledge, that it is sinful to endeavour to acquire riches and honour at the expense of religion: it will follow, that it is our duty, and as reasonable beings we are compelled, to regard as holy, and to practise all the principles of the Israelitish law, if even they should cause us temporal loss and inconvenience. Yes, brethren! discard the injurious counsels of avarice from your bosom, no matter in what shape it may present itself to entice you into evil; and believe at all times and under all circumstances in the word of promise, spoken through the mouth of the sweet Singer of Israel:

נער הייתי גם זקנתי ולא ראיתי צדיק נעזב וזרעו מבקש לחם : תהל׳ לז׳ כה׳ :

"I have been young, have also grown old, but I have never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his children begging for bread." Psalm xxxvii. 25.

If then you are blessed with riches, you will be humble; if you have little, you will be contented; but if poverty and distress should have been dispensed to you by the Merciful One, do not, I entreat you, throw off his yoke; for be assured, that if you suffer for your sins—for the good also occasionally err—in this life, you will be more deserving of dwelling after your decease in everlasting happiness, in the presence of the Eternal Majesty.

May God's blessing attend you now and forever. Amen.

Tebeth 27th. } 5591.
January 12th.

DISCOURSE XIII.

THE FESTIVAL OF PURIM.

To the ever-kind Father of his people, who has so often displayed his mercy to his children, be praise and glory, from now to all eternity! Amen.

BRETHREN!

If we examine the occurrences of life, and search into the causes of the events with which our experience has made us familiar, we will often find, that the best laid plans were frequently frustrated by small causes, and that, no matter how much a man had guarded every avenue of his enterprise, some mischance or other yet crept in to mar the entire structure of his brain. All experience therefore proves, that no one is safe against the evils which beset human life, and that, however exalted, every child of Adam is liable to the same misfortunes as the humblest and meanest of our species. Many a one perhaps consulted the experience of past ages, obtained the assistance of the powerful and wise, and employed all the strength and ingenuity of his own towering genius: and yet the event disappointed his high expectations, and he was compelled to yield his enterprise before he had even approached the desired consummation. Nothing, consequently, is more firmly established by thousands of examples, than the words of Solomon in the book of Proverbs (xvi. 33):

בחיק יוטל את הגורל ומה' כל משפטו : משלי טז' לג':

"In the lap the lot is thrown, but all its decision cometh from the Lord."

And well it is that thus the faculties of man are organized by God, that thus his sphere of action is limited by Superior Power; for if it were permitted to the good to lay plans for the improvement of their fellow-beings, and to execute them with uniform good success: the same power to do evil would then of necessity belong to the wicked, and they would thus triumphantly do their deeds of mischief, unless a special providence of God should interpose at the attempted consummation of any deed of wickedness to prevent any evil to acrue therefrom. But as it now is, that man cannot calculate with certainty upon the issue of any event, since the whole future is alike hidden from all: the good can attempt their works of kindness and rely with a well-founded hope upon the assistance of God; and no man need fear too greatly the power of the sinners, seeing that their fate is controlled by the same kind Being, who manifested himself to his adorers as the Almighty God, and as the Power from whom all the strength of all existing things is derived. If then man complains of his weakness, it behoves him to consider, that his safety, while in this state of existence, is mainly owing to this very weakness; since every one of all who surround him, of all who have preceded him, of all who will follow him, is, has been, or will be, as much circumscribed in his power of evil, as he is, who so bitterly complains of the apparent injustice and hardship at finding himself so constantly checked by obstacles in his undertakings. And unless human nature were changed, that is to say, unless every individual of the human family could be induced by internal impulse to do that only which is good in the eyes of God and man, or in other words, unless man would cease to be man: it would in effect be abandoning the weaker and more unsuspicious to the caprice and tyranny of the fierce and designing, if the Almighty were to give to man a greater power over his own destinies than he now possesses. Who then will not discover in this very circumstance, as well as in every other of our organization, that all we know of is ordained in a manner which no foresight nor experience of ours could improve?

"But why," asks some one, "do we so often see the pious abandoned for a time to the evil designs of the wicked, before he is overtaken by divine vengeance? Why triumphs so often the ungodly, and for so long a period, over the righteous sufferer?" To these seemingly startling questions of the doubter, so often asked with the melancholy shake of the head denoting a distrust in divine Providence, we can easily find answers, if we only dive a little beneath the surface of things, and endeavour to trace the reasons for God's rule on earth, without rashly presuming to discover the whole of his impenetrable counsels. Let us examine the conduct of even the best man, or of the best set of men that ever existed, and we shall find that some fault was yet theirs, that in some cases they proved themselves flesh and blood; for with reverence to the illustrious dead we must confess, that Abraham, Jacob and Moses, in some few instances, departed from the rule which they themselves acknowledged as the only road to salvation for them. This in nowise derogates the least from the proud preëminence, by which they stand so much above the rest of mankind; for it was consonant with their nature, that they, who had not yet laid aside the tenements of clay in which their pure souls were bound up, should sometimes, though seldom, or perhaps once only in their life, pay the forfeit of their not being, according to their nature, free from a temptation to sin.

Again, since man is constituted a free agent by divine sufferance, and since no force is laid on any of his inclinations, save it be through the warning voice of revelation, and by paternal chastisement: it is unavoidable that wicked men should at times arise, ay, even those, whom we, from their great dissimilarity to ourselves, are apt to style a disgrace to human nature. Then again we must discover, that the very superiority of the good over the bad makes the former obnoxious to the latter. Now it is this antipathy which is often made by God the instrument to act as a punishment to those who fear Him, when they give way to their inclinations, and stray in some degree from the path of their duty.—Here then we have the solution to the timid inquiries of the wavering. The righteous has sinned, and immediately the wicked has the power conferred to harm him for a season; and as long as the latter keeps within bounds, and heaps no more evil upon the other than he ought to bear for his sins, we cannot arraign divine justice for suffering the temporary triumph; but as soon as the sufferings of the good exceed their just measure, we have thousands of examples to prove that divine assistance is not withheld, that divine vengeance is not stayed, the moment the intention of the wicked becomes manifest, "to swallow (to use the language of Holy Writ) him who is more righteous than he." And if we ask for a striking illustration, we can find one in the occasion of the festival of *Purim*, which we are about to celebrate at this very season. The history of the book of Esther is, no doubt, familiar to you all; and we shall therefore notice only the principal features thereof, for the sake, merely, of pointing out the connection of the circumstances narrated there, and to apply it to prove the correctness of our assertion, that the righteous, though suffering, will not be entirely abandoned to the machination of the godless. The precise period of the history under consideration is not correctly ascertained; but in all probability, or at least as some suppose,* it was after the building of the second temple, that a king of Persia, whose dominions extended from the Ganges to the sources of the Nile, gave a great entertainment to the inhabitants of his capital, Susa; during the progress of the feast, as he was considerably elated with wine, he ordered that his wife should appear before the whole assembled multitude, that all might be delighted with her beauty. The proud queen refused to obey the ridiculous command of her imperious lord, who, highly incensed, consulted the chiefs of the empire concerning the punishment to be inflicted on her. Vashti was accordingly removed from the royal dignity, to satisfy the king's resentment; but he soon repented of the rash act, and to compensate himself for the loss of her, every female of note was gathered unto Susa to be submitted to his approval, and at length he found the Jewess Esther the most pleasing in his eyes, and she was declared queen instead of Vashti. The history of the exalted orphan presents some features for profound meditation; and we cannot refuse our admiration to one (no matter what her faults might have been) who gratefully recollected the kindness of her cousin Mordecai, by whom she had been educated after the death of her parents, although now raised to the highest honours which could be conferred on her; as we read: "And the command of Mordecai, Esther did, just as when she was under his charge." Mordecai soon after this time had an opportunity of being serviceable to the king, by being instrumental in discovering the conspiracy of two chamberlains against the life of their master; for the present no reward was bestowed on the unpretending Israelite, who in likelihood was satisfied with having done no more than his duty in protecting the government under which he lived; but this act of fidelity was entered upon the records of the empire, and it was destined to become the cause of salvation to Mordecai and the whole remnant of Israel. It was not long after this last event, that the king raised one Haman, surnamed the Agagite, to the office of chief minister of the empire, and commanded every one of his servants to pay due homage to the favourite by falling down in the dust before him. Mordecai, however, refused to pay the servile tribute, and having been noticed by the haughty Haman, he was denounced as a Jew, and as one rebellious to the commands of the king. Haman, to avenge his insulted dignity, did not think it sufficient to remove the hated Jew alone, but also the whole Jewish people, amongst whom Mordecai was, probably, a chief of high standing. But not having the power to do any act of violence without the king's consent, he endeavoured to obtain this by flattering his cupidity and inflaming his resentment. Yet before he ventured on this step, he threw lots, to discover, by diving into futurity, which day would be the most propitious for the execution of his plans. The choice fell upon the thirteenth of the twelfth month; and having thus discovered, as he vainly imagined, the most fatal day for the Jewish people, he fancied that he was guarded from all disappointment in the execution of his project; since, as he thought, he had ascertained to a surety the will of fate, according to the superstitious notions of the heathens, not believing that He, who is alone enthroned in heaven, directs all things, as is best consonant with his wisdom. Haman having easily obtained the concurrence of the king, promulgated a decree in the name of the sovereign, that on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month all Jews in all the provinces of the empire should be slain and their property confiscated for the use of the state, or in other words for the benefit of Haman, to whom the king had granted the right of proceeding with the Jews according to his pleasure. Already were the enemies of Israel rejoiced, already were the swords unsheathed, and with joyous anticipation our adversaries looked anxiously for the coming of the fatal day. But in vain was their early joy, for it had been otherwise ordained by the Father of his people, and the most unexpected help rescued them from the imminent destruction. Esther had hitherto never revealed her origin or her people; she lived securely in the king's palace, unconscious of the danger which threatened the whole race of Jacob. Suddenly the news was brought to her, that her beloved kinsman was at the palace gate in the habiliments of mourning. She sent to inquire the cause, when the dreadful decree was transmitted to her by Mordecai, who exhorted her to go to the king and supplicate him for the salvation of her people. But the arbitrary laws of the Persian empire made it a capital offence for any one to approach the king's presence without having been summoned; and it had happened that the queen herself had not been called for the space of thirty days. She therefore sent in reply to Mordecai a representation of the great personal risk she would incur by the hazardous step which he recommended. But Mordecai, feeling a perfect confidence in God, could not tolerate this expression of fear, even in a woman; he answered therefore in these memorable words: "Imagine not in thy mind to escape in the king's palace alone of all the Jews. For if thou remainest silent at this time, enlargement and help may arise to the Jews from elsewhere, and thyself and thy father's house may perish; and who knoweth, but that thou hast reached the royal dignity for this emergency?" The queen needed no farther admonition; for the spark of enthusiastic confidence in God had been kindled, and she ordered Mordecai to proclaim a fast for all the Jews in Susa, in order that they might merit the favour of God by humiliating themselves before Him, whom they had always found a sure support in the hour of trouble. The third day of the fast had already commenced, but Esther had not yet been called; when summoning all the fortitude which a righteous cause must inspire, she clothed herself in royal garments, and boldly advanced to the inner court of the palace, where the king was seated on his throne. The rising resentment at her boldness was soon changed into kindlier feelings, and he held out to her the sceptre which he bore in his hand, thus showing her, by the customary sign of grace, that her offence had been pardoned. Calculating correctly, that Esther would hardly have risked her life, unless she had a weighty request to prefer, he offered her half his kingdom, if she wished it; but all she asked was, that the king and Haman should partake of a repast in her own apartments. The king and Haman did as she had desired; again Ahasveros repeated his magnificent offer, and again she merely asked for a repetition of the favour granted her for the coming day. I need not relate to you the eventful occurrences of the following night and morning; for you all doubtless know how Haman found himself already humbled before the man he so much hated, when he was again summoned to attend the queen. Esther now delayed no longer to reveal to the king her people, and in the most pathetic manner she begged for her own life and the salvation of her kindred race. The king evidently incensed at the daring unknown, who had meditated the death of his wife, demanded the name of the wretch, and imagine his surprise when answered: "This wicked Haman!" His fate was now sealed, and from the banquet he was led to the gibbet, where he expiated with his life for the evil intended against the innocent. The decree against the Jews was repealed; and the thirteenth day of Adar, on which their enemies had hoped to extirpate them, was by the royal authority appointed as a day on which they might freely exercise vengeance on those who had meditated their downfal. We may perhaps regret, that the Israelites of those days took so bloody a revenge; but we should reflect into what misery these enemies had intended to plunge them; how fierce their delight had been at the anticipated slaughter; and that moreover the entire remnant of the people of God had been threatened with utter annihilation by those very men who afterwards fell beneath the sword of their intended victims. In this manner was Israel saved from the evil designs of Haman; and the festival of Purim was instituted to celebrate annually the wonderful event, and to return at the recurrence of this season our thanks to our Deliverer, who always came to our assistance, when man rose up against us. But does not the fate of Haman teach us how watchful is the superintendence of God over the affairs of man—and how inefficient are all the cunningly devised plans of the proud and wicked to injure those who are too weak to protect themselves from the impending danger? Little did Haman think, that, when he alone was invited to the queen's table, he went to his death; little did he imagine that the sons, of whom he boasted, would perish so soon after him; little did he believe, that Mordecai, for whom he had erected a scaffold, would become the first officer of the king; and yet all this did come to pass, and all Haman's art for evil was rendered as nought, at the moment of his greatest seeming security. Truly may we say, that "the lot is thrown by man, but that to God alone belongs the decision." If then, oppressed one, thou art suffering under severe affliction, if thou seest thy best plans fail of their intended effect: let thy confidence nevertheless remain unshaken in the God by whose favour and will thou wert sent hither, to earn for thyself on earth an immortal happiness. If thou seest the wicked flourish for a while, if thou beholdest their power extending wider and wider; fear thou not, for they, as well as thou, have a limit set to their ambition, and like the waves of the ocean which are broken by the sand against which they dash so furiously, the strength of the unrighteous is exhausted by the humble resistance which the moral force of the mind of the lowly good opposes to the fierce onset; for this is the immovable and wise decree of God. Cease therefore thy complaining, son of the earth, and be assured, that if thy power be broken, if thy strength be gone, the powerful Arm held out over thee for thy protection is one that is never wearied, that the Providence that watches over thee is never tired. And if we as Israelites ask: Why are we left in servitude, at so hopeless a distance from our own inheritance; why do the nations triumph over the chosen people; why have the shearers so often despoiled the lonely sheep? we must reply, because this long captivity, this seemingly hopeless suffering will and must teach us to place that confidence in God, as our sole Protector and Saviour, which we failed to do when we were in our own land; for we have since our dispersion been taught that our Father yet lives, although we have been banished from his favourite abode. We cannot despair of a coming redemption, if we will but reflect from how many dangers we have escaped; how often the net was rent asunder which was spread to ensnare our unsteady feet. And therefore, brethren, our hope must be strong, our faith must be unshaken, if the temporary evils be ever so great; for we have the promise of God, of Him who never wavers, that a mother may sooner cast off the child of her own body, than that He would forsake the nation which He once chose as his peculiar treasure before the eyes of all the world!

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* The Ahasveros mentioned in the Bible, must have been subsequent to Cambyses, who was the conqueror of Egypt; for it is said: "Ahasveros who reigned from *Hodu* to *Cush*." Does this not mean from India to Ethiopia? May it not have been the eccentric and tyrannical Xerxes, of whose strange exploits Grecian history is so full?

O God, Thou who lookest down from thy unbounded realms of greatness upon the humble and the lowly, that walk before Thee in meekness: have compassion once more, in thy grace, upon the smallest of nations, and display again to them thy miraculous power, as in those days when Thou ledst them forth from the land of Egypt, to follow thy guidance into the wilderness, where Thou didst give them thy law through Moses thy servant! Amen.

Adar 10th. } 5591.
Febr. 23d. }

NOTE.—Against the several historical sketches scattered through my discourses it may perhaps be alleged, that it was useless to tell the people what they can find better told in the Bible. In answer to this I would merely observe, that these discourses are intended for the young as well as the old, for the ignorant no less than the well informed; and I thought that, by presenting the chief points connected with the fasts, festivals and other subjects, I might perhaps succeed in imparting some useful information, which, though obvious, might otherwise not be accessible to all. At all events this view satisfied me, and I trust that the candid reader will not condemn, though he may not approve, my course.

DISCOURSE XIV.

REWARD AND PUNISHMENT.

O Almighty Protector, whose eye surveyeth all, whose foresight careth for all, whose power reigneth over all, shield, protect, and save us from all evil, and ward off from us all affliction! Amen.

Brethren!

In whatever we undertake of worldly matters, our object will be to obtain some positive good, or to ward off some definite evil; for no matter how much this reason may be concealed by others, which we ourselves may perhaps imagine to be the real causes: still the desire for some absolute advantage is, I may freely say always, the chief motive which prompts our action. Thus we see the merchant crossing the stormy ocean for the sake of augmenting his wealth; the philosopher pursuing his studies to perfect his discoveries; the warrior braving all peril in search of glory:—and on the other hand we see a man submitting himself to the knife of the surgeon to be cured of a disease; and the weak overstraining his exhausted strength to escape from impending danger. It is in truth the principle of self-love, implanted in us for the wisest of purposes, which is ever active to impel us to reach whatever is agreeable to our mind; and if it is exercised under proper limitations, it must be the means of making us as good and useful as we were intended to be by the

Almighty, and we shall be such men as will be benefactors and guides to our species.—Self-love is in this respect then essentially different from selfishness; since the first looks towards gratifying the mind as well as the body, the latter only towards yielding to the brutal desires and feelings inherent to man. If, therefore, we find a man always striving to gratify himself only, even at the expense of the rights and feelings of others: we may freely pronounce him one with whom the candid and upright will avoid all intercourse and connection, since self is to him the greatest and dearest object in the world. But if a man respects the same rights in others, which he wishes to enjoy for himself, if he looks around to gratify the finer feelings of humanity, which proceed from a tender sensibility and a sympathy for the wants and sufferings of others: we then say, that he is one that loves his species, and the refined love he bears to himself, impels him to make others around him happy,* at the expense even of personal inconvenience. According to this exposition, a selfish man can never do good, since he only lives for himself; and a man of sensibility only can act up to the duties required of him, inasmuch as he loves those also, who like him were created after God's own image; and because he looks upon himself as a member of the human family at large, and subject to the same regulations, which the Creator thought fit to promulgate for the benefit of all, and the safety of every individual. The indulgence of the passions, the rioting in debaucheries, the imbruing of hands in human blood, are the characteristics of the former; active benevolence, however, humility and piety those of the latter; the one degrades humanity to the level of the brute; the other proves, that in all, save mortality, he is but a little less than angels.—Yet, as our ideas are from the moment of our birth continually and irresistibly drawn to the gratification of our bodily wants: it is very natural, nay unavoidable, that we should strive to obtain the positive worldly good and to avoid absolute bodily evil. Thus, we should unhesitatingly call any one a madman, who would try to persuade us, that it would be conducive to our comfort, to remain the whole day immersed up to the chin in water, or that the flesh of carrion could furnish us with delicious food; for our experience, our taste, or our feeling, would demonstrate the fallacy of such notions, and the aberration from our usually entertained opinions of the physical reformer would strike as an evidence of his being of unsound mind. In this way we are taught by taste and experience to satisfy the cravings of nature, in a manner the most agreeable to our disposition and organization. The food, therefore, which every human being is obliged to take to preserve his existence, is various according to the tastes and habits of various individuals or even nations. The garments, too, with which we cover ourselves must, to a greater or less degree, be adapted to the season and climate; and the pursuits of man must also be regulated, as far as physical strength is concerned, according to his ability of enduring fatigues and deprivations. Likewise, feeling and experience will soon teach, that to plunge a finger into the fire will cause pain; and, undoubtedly, if a savage should accidentally have scalded himself from an utter ignorance of the effects of boiling water upon the skin, he will be more circumspect with its use for the future; since experience has now taught him to dread the unpleasant and painful result. It is needless to exemplify so obvious a proposition at greater length, and it was only touched upon to show in the sequel its application to moral actions.—To proceed: whatever pursuits we engage in, we must have an especial and specific object in view, though even to ourselves this object may not be so defined, as to enable us to explain our sensation to others.—If we enter into mercantile speculations, our object is, to a certainty, gain in the first instance, be this for our own benefit or that of others.—The man of learning would, in all probability, forsake his studies, if he were convinced, that the end of all his endeavours would be an ignominious death, after a life spent in the most dreadful privations, and that his name should be buried in total oblivion.—The soldier would certainly never strive to signalize himself, if he had not some hopes that his name would be honourably mentioned in the records of history. The evident objects which these and many others have in view are self-aggrandizement and notoriety; and even if these are not the sole springs of action, they are, nevertheless, the primary causes to a certain extent at least. Now, where the effect is apparent and immediate, and the enjoyment of the desired end in a measure certain: the energies of our nature will be strongly urged to forward the accomplishment by all means possible to us; and some of you have probably experienced, how, after making great exertions for the attainment of any object, you became the more energetic the more you approached the wished-for consummation. It seems, that the almost expiring power receives a new access, as the end comes into view, and this enables us to overcome difficulties once considered as insurmountable.—And since the advantages of riches are apparent, and the beneficial results of fame and standing obvious to all: we see every mortal endeavoring his utmost to equal those who are at ease and honoured around him, and no exertion is considered too great, which will place a man at the height of human power. Nay, crimes are pardoned to a successful sinner; and what in an humble transgressor is called treason or murder, is styled patriotism and heroic greatness, if success has crowned the efforts of the wily demagogue. We, therefore, need not manifest any astonishment, that riches are eagerly sought or honours ardently coveted, if it were that life was given merely to enable us to become rich and great. But if this were the sole object of God in creating man, how unequally would his favours then be distributed! how many would then be wronged out of their rightful portion, unless we could imagine, that the world was made for the sole purpose of enabling a handful to become possessed of great wealth, and a few others to share amongst themselves all the honours and power incident to man. This idea—that all was made for them—may well suit the proud and arrogant, those who rely on their own strength, who seem to build their habitations amidst the stars; but never could it be consonant with divine goodness, never could this have been the intention of the God, kind to all, before whom the greatest of the earth are but as dust, and before whom, praised be his name for evermore! the poor and the rich, the weak and the strong, the foolish as much as the wisest, are alike. No—never for such purposes—to gain riches and acquire greatness was life dispensed to so many millions of intelligent creatures; but for the end of leading them on to greater happiness, to the permanent and unfading bliss, which was for ever destined to be the reward of virtue. Here is a theme to dwell on with delight, this is an idea from which we never can turn away but with an entire and heartfelt satisfaction; for the knowledge of its truth fully demonstrates that, in what is really essential, all men have been truly created equal; since to be virtuous according to our means, and to be blessed if we have done all we could accomplish, are objects within the reach of every one that ever was sent on earth; and thus we may actually maintain, that a perfect equality of gifts has been conferred, although in outward circumstances and in the distribution of outward blessings there appears an inequality, which, however, was so ordained for a wise and beneficial purpose. And yet we see, that the power and glory of outward and mortal life are so inordinately coveted; and why? solely because they are more apparent than spiritual advantages, and to a great degree actually necessary for our preservation; and these causes induce a man to persevere in their acquisition, even after all reasonable wants have been abundantly satisfied, and to disregard the benefits which the pursuit of religion will confer on his undying soul. No moralist—it may be conceded—if he is a real friend to his species, will ever inculcate, that a man should not seek the means of an honest competency; no one, who lays a just value upon the true glory of an honourable and revered name, can, consistently with religion, teach that it would be safe to disregard public opinion, and to make oneself ridiculous by eccentricity or an overbearing contempt of, and supercilious demeanour towards, others. No, religion asks not self-denial of this kind, for all the books of Scripture praise highly the possession of a good name, and recommend industry and perseverance; nay more, wealth and fame are considered and held up to view as blessings to be desired, but always to be sought under the limitations of God's holy, everlasting, and unchangeable law. Thus it is certainly true, that the benefits arising from the observance of the Sabbath and festivals are not so apparent as the loss resulting therefrom, if we view the subject only in a pecuniary light. But admitting this to its fullest extent, does it not strike you nevertheless, that the infringement of the law has its source in base and mean selfishness? For what noble feeling is gratified by Sabbath-breaking? Does it promote the welfare of the community? Is the mind of the individual himself improved by seeking gain instead of the favour of God? Admit again, that money spent in charity and the maintainance of religious establishments—when, as given among us, owing to the small number of our people, ambitious views and thirst for distinction cannot be gratified thereby—admit I say, that money thus spent is to all intents and purposes a diminution of our wealth by as much as is given: still, is this enough to prevent a man from exercising the most amiable feelings of human nature? Is the loss of a little money sufficient to excuse him from dispensing blessings around him to those who need his assistance? Should this induce him to refuse contributing his portion towards the endowment of places of public worship and general instruction? Yet there are, unfortunately, many of ample means who contribute little or nothing to promote the religion of their ancestors, who suffer the indigent to beg in vain, intent only on increasing their heaps of gold, and augmenting their importance and power; and still they claim the name of being good, and arrogate to themselves the distinction of being kindly disposed to the community; and there are not wanting those who will, fawning upon the rich, concede virtues to them, which they could never discover in the poor. But who can in justice call that man good, who closes his eyes to the distress of the needy? who can praise the public spirit and piety of him, who suffers the house of God to fall into ruins, sees with composure the poor remaining uninstructed, when his mite freely given might perchance resuscitate the falling cause, by inducing others to follow his example of liberality? Every sensible person will condemn so mean and grovelling a spirit, who is guilty of minding solely his own personal interest and convenience regardless of the general good; and if he expresses in words ever so much interest for the wants of his fellow-men, no one will value them in the least while his deeds do not correspond with his professions. In short, we willingly acknowledge that religious duties are seldom of that nature, that wealth and personal ease are promoted by them; neither charity nor the observance of the festivals brings any gain, which we can count; to visit the sick, to attend at the couch of suffering, and to watch with the dead, are tasks upon our convenience; but, setting all considerations of a disinterested practice of duty out of sight, who knows but that our being rich and at ease may depend solely and exclusively upon our attention to these duties? We all have felt, that no man is safe in his possessions; that the greatest wealth can be dissipated, and the most powerful one may be humbled; and as thus we know not how long and by what tenure we may be permitted to hold our property from God: would it not be wise and prudent to obey Him, carefully and implicitly, even if nothing but worldly interest were to instruct us? Now grant then, that wealth and honours are the greatest gifts which the Almighty can bestow on mortals: it becomes evidently the more neccessary for those that are timid and unconfiding to be the more strictly on their guard with reference to obedience to the will of God, so that they may be always held deserving of being left in possession of their acquired or inherited riches and power. But who is bold enough to say, that there is nothing more costly in this world, than the most successful fruits of avarice and ambition? who will assert that the greatest miser and the greatest despot are the happiest of men? And yet, unless the persons who possess wealth and power in their greatest extent were the happiest, wealth and power cannot confer the utmost happiness to which we can attain in this life of probation. "What then is the greatest good?" To this we answer, piety towards God and love towards our fellow-beings: these are blessings which the humblest can enjoy to as great a degree as the most powerful, of which the foolish can partake, though of necessity in a somewhat more limited sphere, as well as the wisest. And enter once the humble dwelling of the lowly pious, and though wealth may be absent, though no splendour surrounds him, though the toil by which he lives must be daily renewed, though his name is unknown beyond his own neighbourhood: be assured, nevertheless, that he bears that within him, which is to be prized beyond all wealth, beyond all glitter valuable. Watch him as he steps over his threshold after a day of labour, behold his good housewife approaching him with their infant on her arm, see another child clinging around his knee in childish ecstacy; and now observe his eyes turned upwards with tearful but glad adoration to Heaven for the truly happy lot which is his by the blessing of the Supreme: and then say, what, compared to such a state, is all the pomp of wealth and power, where envy and hatred often assume the mask of love and friendship, to beguile the miserable remnant of mortality of his anger, that he may not bestow on others the estate, which they, his heirs, expect to come in possession of at his decease.—Now grant, therefore, for argument's sake, that the pleasures and blessings of wealth and power are visible and tangible to a much greater degree than those of piety: it behoves us, nevertheless, to throw in the opposite scale the anxiety and vexation incident to worldly greatness, and that to piety there are joined blessings and pleasures which the former can never impart.—Thus much may be said, even without adverting to the outwardly unseen and unfelt promises, which Scriptures record to the advantage of the good; since if life were even to terminate with our death, there is yet sufficient reason for preferring piety and the observance of religious duties to any other pursuit, because of the satisfaction and the sublime tranquillity of the mind which accompany them. But there are happier, higher, and more enduring fruits of goodness, which sooner or later will become the portion of the worshippers of God—and let others triumph in their wickedness, let the good ever so often bow before the powerful sinner—there is a period, and come it will, when the film will be withdrawn from the sight of the wilfully blind, when their infatuation will vanish, but when, alas! it will be too late to remedy the evil which has been once and irretrievably committed!—Yes, brethren, it was even in the time of the prophets, that there lived many who pointed to the prosperity of the sinners, as an evidence, that man might tempt God, and yet escape unscathed, and that consequently it would appear, that a person would do well to hold with a firm grasp what he once possesses, and that it were unwise to spend any thing in charity and other religious purposes. To rebut these objections of cupidity and weakness of faith in the justice of God, Malachi, the last of those illustrious men, by whose mouth the Lord thought proper to instruct the world, spoke as follows:

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* Having lent out the MS., I find the following lines endorsed on the margin, in the handwriting of an esteemed female friend, whose name I would gladly mention, were I permitted to do so. I really feel gratified that the sentiments expressed above should have, so long ago, struck so great a mind as Pope's.

"Thus God and nature link'd the gen'ral frame,
And bade self-love and social be the same."
Pope's Essay on Man.

"Your words have been strong against me, saith the Lord, and you said, What have we been speaking against thee? You said, It is needless to serve God, and what did we gain, when we observed his statutes, and walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts? And now we call the presumptuous happy; yea, even they that practise wickedness are built up, yea they have even tempted the Lord and have escaped. Then they that feared the Lord spoke to one another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and it was written before Him in the book of remembrance, for those who fear the Lord and reverence his name." Malachi iii.

And then continues the prophet:

והיו לי אמר ה׳ צבאות ליום אשר אני עשה סגלה
וחמלתי עליהם כאשר יחמל איש על בנו העבד
אתו : ושבתם וראיתם בין צדיק לרשע בין עבד
אלהים לאשר לא עבדו : מלאכי ג׳ יז׳ :

"And they shall be mine, on that day, which I have set apart for judgment, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will spare them as a man spareth his son that serveth him. And you shall return, and see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him who hath not served him." Ibid. 17–18.

Here are the objections of the timid stated; they see not the use of serving God; no private interest is subserved by religion, no notoriety is gained by humility; they point with trembling apprehension to the proud wealthy sinners, who, so to say, brave the anger of the Lord with impunity; they next imagine that wickedness will not meet with disfavour, they hesitate and ask, if it were true that punishment is the consequence of sin, why does it not follow instantaneously and on all occasions? But they observe not, they regard not, that, if punishment were at all times to ensue immediately, a true and disinterested reverence of God and confidence in his providence and justice could not possibly take root in the human breast. Consider, brethren, that, if for instance a violation of the Sabbath should be followed by the sudden death of the transgressor, it would not be the least meritorious in us to abstain from infringing the law, seeing that we should be destroyed if we disobeyed; and consequently, not obedience to God, but interest, worldly and palpable interest, the fear of bodily harm, would deter us. Suppose, too, that reward should always be the fruit of piety in some tangible shape or other: to be pious, then, would only be to hold out an inducement to God to pay us for our work, just as the day-labourer expects to obtain his pay from his master when his allotted task is done. Piety would thus be reduced to a mere barter on the one hand, and a remedy on the other. But this never was, never could have been the intention of God in making man a free agent, by which he was designed to choose from conviction and inclination, not to be bribed and frightened. And though to serve God from motives of fear and even of interest be a virtue too, yet the greatest moral perfection attainable is to serve Him from pure feelings of adoration, to be impelled solely by an admiration of his greatness, wisdom, and beneficence, which are so abundantly displayed in all his works; since from yon splendid orb, that serves us as a light by day, down to the motes that dance in his rays, and the minute insect unobservable by the naked eye, all is one chain of beauty, order, and perfection. This is true piety, true adoration of God; here no meanness mixes itself with our holier sensations; here no avarice chokes up the fountain of sincere benevolence; here no ambition for worldly greatness crowds out the noble offsprings of religious obedience; for then, even whilst not unmindful of our preservation, whilst labouring in the sphere assigned us by an All-wise Providence, we shall be willing to love God above all, and our neighbour like ourselves. In fine, unless you convince yourselves, that nothing but ultimate injury can result from purely worldly pursuits, that at the best no splendour here enjoyed can in the least avail you, that no earthly greatness can atone for duties neglected, for misdeeds committed, and time misspent: you must remain on the lowest degree of excellence, for you lack that which is the truly valuable, the only thing by which you can demonstrate, that your life has not passed away like the vision of a night, of which nothing is recollected when the eyelids are freed from the bonds of mortal slumber.—And, disguise it as you will, imagine a thousand necessities, urge innumerable excuses, nothing holy will be found at the root of your worldly pursuits; for self-aggrandizement alone prompts you to these exertions; since you only desire wealth in order to become rich; you seek wisdom to appear wise before the world, and if you look for advancement, it is that your power may be felt. In all this there is nothing, either in the motive or the result, which can plead for you on the day of trial; for in none of your doings of this nature can thè glory of God, the well-being of mankind, and your own immortal happiness be the end in view. But if you submit cheerfully, not patiently merely, to the will of God, if you advance step by step to the perfection, which the adorers of the Lord enjoy: you need not tremble for the coming day, for you will then be treasured up as the "son who serveth his father." And will not a state of endless bliss be compensation sufficient for all your exertions? and will not the coming felicity—future it is true, but still certain—be reward enough for all the little good you can accomplish?—Or is it delayed too long for your impatience? Then consider how short at best is your time on earth, how very rapidly those days will flit by, which the rich, the honoured, and the powerful will be permitted to tarry here. And how can you complain of the unreasonableness of suffering you to wait so long, when you ought to reflect, how very confined your ideas are of eternity? Perhaps you fear, that the promised reward may never come? Then know, that God it is, who promised it through the mouth of his faithful servants, and that none of his words ever falls to the ground without fulfilling its object! And you can doubt Him? Israelites! are you those so little of faith? Have not his promises always been accomplished? And who more than your nation has experienced this so often and so remarkably? Reflect that your people owes its origin to the promise made to Abram, your ancestor, at "the covenant between the pieces," and consider that just as the limited time had expired, your ancestors were redeemed by a mighty hand from oppression and thraldom.—The Israelites were groaning under heavy toil, the sacred Record says, and God heard their cries from amidst their labour, and He remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob; Moses was sent as God's messenger to Pharaoh, to claim the dismissal of the oppressed Hebrews from the mighty king of Egypt, who insolently declared, that he knew not the Eternal, and would not suffer Israel to go;—but he was at length glad to let our people march out unto freedom, when his pride had been humbled, and when he had felt, that it is in vain to oppose the counsels of the Most High, and that no station will shield a man against the arrows of his punishment. This is the history of our people, as the book of Exodus tells it, and it has been verified and proved by the researches of the wise and curious; but it needs no other evidence than Holy Writ to convince Jews of the truth of sacred history; I speak to believers, and farther demonstration is therefore useless.—Here then is evidence that the word of God is immutable, unchangeable, and its effect certain; we can accordingly not doubt the promises of Him, who has never deceived, though their fulfilment has as yet not been accomplished, though their effect is hidden from our sight, and their working is beyond our comprehension. And notwithstanding the weakness of our reason, we are not left in uncertainty concerning the different issues of vice and virtue, for God himself has informed us of them; and if the punishment of sin and the reward of piety should even not be displayed in this state of limited existence: we may rest assured that both will be proved to a certainty on that awful day of judgment, when it will be seen by all what difference there is between the righteous and the wicked, and when God will show how miserable he must be rendered, who has remained a stranger to his worship, and how happy he is who has truly served Him with all his soul and all his heart, and who swerved not from his duty, although oppressed by worldly ills, which were sent as a means of purifying him from his sins and transgressions.

O Lord, whose power is every where, whose word is unchangeable, restore thy people to their boundaries; and may, according to thy promise, the sacrifice of Judah and Jerusalem be again agreeable to Thee as in days of yore and years of former times. May this soon come to pass, nay speedily and in our days, through thy anointed, the son of David! Amen.

Nissan 9th. } 5591.
March 23d. }

DISCOURSE XV.

THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE LORD.

THOU, who only desirest the well-being of thy creatures, and findest delight in their obedience to thy will, only in as much as it tends to promote their own happiness, bless us with wisdom and knowledge, that we may understand the ways of thy holy law, and follow them in truth and sincerity! Amen.

BRETHREN!

If on all occasions we could but know the true effect of any deed we contemplate doing; if our fore-knowledge of futurity were sufficient to teach us to a certainty the event before we commence working: it would be quite unnecessary to lay down rules and directions for our government; for even the smallest child then would always choose the most beneficial, provided its intellect were not disordered.—But how does the case stand now, in the manner human knowledge is organized? who knows to-day what is to happen on the morrow? True it is, that men of learning can tell beforehand, when certain appearances in the heavens will take place,—yes, they know to a certainty almost the minute on which the lights of heaven will be darkened; but this is only knowing by observation, how the Creator has organized his handiwork—nature; this is but confessing, in other words, the omnipotent power of the Ruler of all, whose works are perfect, and respond ever to the intended effect. But of the ultimate result of our own actions, of the final issue of the deeds wrought in our present existence, even the wisest of us is ignorant. It was the will of God, that man's reason should not reach beyond a certain extent, that human research should be bounded by the limits of reality—the past and the present; though even in this space his mind often wanders in racking uncertainty and perplexing doubt, for the want of knowledge of details; but into futurity—no man can dive of his own free will, nay, he cannot in the least degree lift the vail which hides the surface of coming things; and thus he is left to rely upon the Author of his being for the issue of his endeavours, and, willing or unwilling, he is unable to place himself one step beyond the reach of this Infinite Being, and in his omnipresent care he must repose his trust, yea, though he impiously dare to question the existence of God! Well may we say, that in God alone we act and exist, for without his sufferance nothing could remain in being even for one moment; as we are taught in the sublime words of the Psalmist: "Thou but hidest thy face, they are affrighted; Thou takest away their spirit, they perish, and to their dust they return." (Psalm civ. 29.) And being thus short-lived, short-sighted mortals, subject perpetually to be compelled to resign our spirit into the hands of the Giver thereof, we ought to rely for protection where alone it can be found, and seek for knowledge at the Fountain of unerring wisdom.

If now a man should ask: "Why has God left us so powerless, and has hidden from us so entirely all knowledge of futurity?" we answer, that this was wisely ordained, in order that no one should rely upon his own wisdom, and trust to his own strength; but that, discovering his weakness and insufficiency, he might learn to pay due deference to his Creator, and subject to his service the entire energy of his mind and body. And as, at the same time, we are ignorant of the actual effects which our conduct, when based upon our own reasoning, will have: it follows as a matter of necessity, that it is our duty to ascertain, if possible, what line of action will be beneficial to ourselves and others, and what will be injurious in its tendency. It must be apparent, upon slight reflection, that if we follow our own inclinations, or in other words, if we surrender ourselves to the guidance of the passions, we must often do that, the effects of which will be injurious; since if it were otherwise, every act of man would be beneficial in its tendency.

For, if we were permitted to do whatever suits our fancy, it would be requisite, in order to constitute our conduct purely good, that nothing but good should result therefrom. But suppose it would suit our fancy to plunder our neighbour's house, to possess ourselves of his property: would this be right and beneficial? yet our neighbour says, he suffers wrong from those whom he never injured; and consequently there can be no unmixed good, where, although the passions of the perpetrator are satisfied to their fullest extent, another one is undeservedly injured in his person or property.—Some one, however, may assert, that passion without the guidance of reason will be destructive, but that reason superadded will be enough to point out a proper course.—But here again we must come to the startling admission, that every human being has a share of reason assigned to him, and that, even admitting reason to be a safe guide, passion, inclination, and interest may raise such a tumult within us, as to drown all suggestions of reason, if no other check be admitted by us. It would thus appear that, since every person would have a right to claim for himself the liberty of acting according to the dictates of his own perception of right (all men being subject alike to be swayed by passion, inclination, and interest), no man's suggestions would be listened to, as to how far reason should hold the government; and, consequently, we should have as many different rules of conduct, as there are human beings; and this would, as shown, engender such a mass of evil,—whether passion be guided by reason or not,—that the majority of men would not be able to bear the wrong, the oppression, and the vexation. to which they would be subject from the powerful, the cunning, and the designing, who would always be on the watch to inflict every sort of burden which could promote their interest, and to which their passions, aided by greater means of harm, would undoubtedly prompt them; and in consequence, for the majority, thus oppressed and suffering, non-existence would be far preferable to existence. Now, as such a state of things would evidently be a disorganization of the social compact, it might justly be argued, that the creation of every thing in so perfect and beautiful a manner had conferred no positive good. What then could be the object of all this harmony so universally observable around us in the entire structure of nature? why should all be at peace save man, the crown of the handiwork of the Lord? If we take this view of our own internal organization, if we in this way put a proper estimate on our efficiency and strength: we must be struck with the conviction, that our reason, though of far greater extent than the instinct of any other animal that inhabits the earth, still requires farther instruction and improvement, in order to constitute it in truth the greatest blessing; for it is only by a proper instruction in relation to what we are to do or not to do, that we can secure unto ourselves and others the greatest possible share of happiness, consistent with our short life on earth, and acting, as we must, with a body subject to pain, decay, and corruption. The instruction thus proved necessary, cannot, ought not, to proceed from a mortal prone to err, liable to be biassed, like ourselves; but from the One, who alone is always unchanged, whose thoughts are uninfluenced by interest or circumstance, and who needs not, and does not fear, in giving his opinion, aught that lives or exists in any part of creation: in other words, we should receive the law which God himself has promulgated for our government, seeing that by obeying it alone, and by causing it to be respected by others, we actually contribute the most we are capable of towards furthering the general welfare of mankind.—And in this ready listening to an instruction emanating from a higher Source of wisdom than ourselves, and in the cheerfulness displayed in correcting our vices, or what is the same, faults habitually committed by yielding to our earthly desires,—I assert, that in a conduct of this kind, proceeding from a sincere conviction of our own insignificance, consists the essence of all true religion. Is religion then, assuming this basis, an arbitrary rule invented by designing priests to impose a heavy yoke upon the unwilling shoulders of an ignorant multitude? is such a religion the effect of ignorance, of bigotry, and of superstition? Or rather, is not this religion the sacred guide granted by Providence, to point out to man the road to happiness? Yes, even the sensual one, and he who always regarded his personal convenience as the greatest good, and the scoffer, who ever ridiculed the idea of God's supervising in his greatness the little affairs of mortals: all must acknowledge, when serious reflection is once roused within them, when confusion seals their lips and forbids them to excuse their follies and the wrongs they have committed, that there is a treasure in the word of God, a life even in death, discoverable in the Revelation of the Lord, which they have wilfully neglected, and that they have reaped tares, instead of the wholesome fruit of life.—

Yes, brethren, let us regard the goods of the earth as ever so valuable, necessity will one time or another force us to confess, that without a respect for religious enactments no true virtue can exist; and how can happiness be imagined, where virtue has not laid the foundation?—True, that virtue may not be always rewarded with outward bliss; but who can estimate the bliss within, the unfading serenity which accompanies the righteous, even unto death?—No farther argument need be adduced to prove the necessity of the law promulgated by God, and the good effects resulting therefrom; since every reasonable being can easily discern the difference between acts arising from a feeling of devotion and confidence in the Lord—and those springing from motives of self-gratification merely, even assuming that such a principle could teach what is good and useful.

"But how is religion to be observed? what are the demands of revealed faith?" These questions, though frequently put in a manner as though they could not be easily solved, can be answered by a simple reference to the records of revelation, the holy Scriptures, for there are recorded the commandments which God instituted as the enactments of his will; and every man, therefore, is bound to do thereof, whatever may be in his power of effecting; and no excuse whatever will justify him for neglecting any practicable duty, which he is certified to be the will of his Creator.—Although this deduction is so perfectly reasonable, permit me to present to you some few observations, in order to illustrate the subject a little more at length; since it is one which merits and ought to receive the serious reflection of every Israelite.—In a former lecture on this subject, it has been shown, that unless a man is willing to make sacrifices of all personal considerations in the cause of piety, he cannot be said to be fired with true ardour for the holy cause. Now, as also partly said, these sacrifices to principle do not consist in an entire abstinence from all pleasures, and in a seclusion from social intercourse; for this never was the intention or scope of our law, which recommends sociality and pleasure, when enjoyed in moderation. But the sacrifices which we are bound to make to the will of God, consist simply in an entire disregard of all consequences, be they good or bad, that may possibly follow upon our doing those acts, which are prescribed by religion. From this definition you will clearly observe, that a mere profession, nay, even a sincere profession of faith, is not all that is demanded, since principles, which prove themselves by words only, are mere outward show, in which there is nothing capable of conferring lasting benefits; but acts, the most trifling even, produce an impression somewhere, and by so much as they are worth, they always tend to augment the general mass of good.—Some one, however, may ask: "Why do we regard the ceremonial parts of religion with so much reverence, and what can be the good resulting from their careful observance?"—Questions of this nature are frequently asked, and even by persons pretending to piety; and in this way neglect of outward acts of worship is excused by many, if the offender holds but fast to the so-called moral laws.—In answer, we have to observe, that no Jew will contend, that honesty, integrity, and neighbourly kindness, are not virtues highly commendable, inculcated in the law, and for which the possessor deserves the blessing of Heaven; but then we also assert, that acts of worship, the ceremonies proper, are necessary, praiseworthy and useful in their tendency. For the following reasons: first, any act of worship proceeding from a pure motive, and obeyed because it is an emanation from the will of God, must produce, the oftener it is repeated, an acquiescence in the dictates of the Lord, and it is a habit of this kind that is at last the true essence of piety and devotion. Secondly, to do those acts, acknowledgedly great and useful, such as charity, justice, and preservation of human life, is in a measure necessary to our nature, and we indulge in their exercise perhaps from motives of interest, since we may one day stand in need ourselves of the same deeds of kindness, which we now show to others. It will thus be evident, that in the execution of social virtues, as we will term the acts commonly called the moral law, the pure devotion towards God may have but little share in prompting them; but in acts of worship, where we alone are the actors, and God the sole witness perhaps of our conduct, true worship can be most signally proved. For in no situation of this life can a heartfelt prayer be recompensed by the prayer of any other son of man, no matter how virtuous he may be; patience under suffering and resignation to divine dispensations cannot be repaid by equal deeds in others; and therefore we must contend, that in these and many other similar acts, the love of God, in its proper sense, is more pointedly exhibited than in any other way. It need not be repeated again in this place, that mere devotional, without social piety, is not to be considered as the sole demand of religion; for we hold it as an essential principle of our faith, that the proper duties of man are not fulfilled, unless he observes the whole enactments of God, which are declared to be his will, and contained in intelligible terms in the books of Moses.—We will admit, that there are devotees who act, as though there were no human being toward whom any duties are to be fulfilled; for their mind is, as it were, wrapt up within themselves —in God they see only a watchful, jealous, Being, who commands them as their master, and requires of them, that all their time should be spent in devotional exercises. We will admit, I say, that there are such devotees, and also, that they are mistaken in their conceptions of God; for He is a just, not an unmerciful, judge; He, indeed, searches the heart, knows whether it is true in his service, but He wishes not that we should cease to be men, as soon as we enter on his worship; not this is the economy which his wisdom established, when He assigned labour to man during his sojourn on earth; and they, therefore, who regard the Merciful One in the light of an arbitrary ruler, have quite misunderstood his will; and consequently we should endeavour to prevent such erroneous ideas from taking root among us. But in admitting this much against what may be termed the excesses of piety, we have admitted all that can reasonably be claimed as an objection to devotional, or rather the irregular and extravagant excesses of devotional feelings. But there are many on the other hand, and unfortunately for the well-being of our religion, the number is so very great, who live as though there were no God! they perhaps do read the Bible of the Lord, but their eye is closed against whatever relates to his worship; they doubtless must be convinced, that regulations, the tendency of which has been to preserve a scattered people entire amidst all the toils, the fatigues, the dangers, the persecutions, of a long captivity—a captivity prolonged to such a length that our hopes almost sicken, that our hearts nearly faint, were it not for the promises of God, so often repeated—must have been instituted by a Wisdom elevated far above our limited capacity, that laws so pure must at least be harmless in their operation. And yet they will ridicule the observance of these very wise, wholesome, priceless precepts, which we call the ordinances of the Lord; and they profess to look with as much contempt upon the pious believer, as if his system were fraught with evil to society. Do I state more than the fact which we are daily compelled to witness? And these scoffers are they, who wish to arrogate to themselves the title of philanthropists, as though the religious were enemies to mankind, and desirous of keeping the multitude groping in darkness. And even when finding that all subterfuges have failed, and when they are unable any longer to contend against the overwhelming force of conviction, that the books of Moses contain the undoubted revelation of the God of nature: they endeavour to excuse their unnatural unbelief by saying, that the statutes of the law were made for Israelites of a former period, but that they have ceased to be binding upon the present generation.—But is it possible, that any one laying claim to reason can be so blinded by ignorance and prejudice, as to maintain such gross absurdities? Where can the law of God be found, if the Pentateuch is no longer in force? Where will you seek for the guide of life, if you do not find it there? Perhaps you may say, that reason shall guide us, that from experience we will gather wisdom.—But where are those monuments of human reason, which have been as lasting as the monuments of revelation? Where are the wise laws drawn from experience? Do we not rather find, that no human being can establish a single principle, which is not liable to be rescinded the following day? And from experience you will derive instruction! when it is evident, by the evidence of this very instructor you so much extol, that no man was ever prevented from following another upon the path of ruin, if no other opinions and principles save those derived from reason and experience prevented him? These facts, I believe to be so self-evident, and so well fortified by what we see every day, that it would be but fatiguing you, brethren, to say any more in refutation of such fallacious arguments.

But there is another point, involved in this mode of pushing the obligation of the word of God from our shoulders, to which I have to draw your attention. If the arguments we have before this adduced in favour of the necessity of a divine revelation be well founded in reason, and if we have succeeded in proving that the law of Moses, so called, is the record thereof: we must come to the conclusion, that the words and commandments contained in the Pentateuch are in truth the manifestation of the will of God, by which He intended to enlighten mankind with regard to their duties, which (in the words of the law itself) "they were to do and live through them;" and then, knowing, as we do, how wise and unwavering God is in all his doings, it is but reasonable to suppose that the enactments of his will, as manifested to Moses, are even to this hour considered by Him in the same light of usefulness and necessity, as at the period when first He announced them.—For if we survey all that immense structure of nature, the creation, of which we form a part: we must discover, that in every particle, wisdom the most unsearchable, order the most unwavering, are manifested. The sun rises in the same manner now, as he did from the first moment of his installation as the light by day; planets upon planets move in their spheres with the utmost regularity without derangement or interruption; and descending to this humble, beautiful, earth of ours, we see spring, and summer, and autumn, and winter, change in a constant circle, with the utmost regularity and precision. Thus has God organized all of which we can form a conception by our organs and senses. And if next we turn our view inward, and observe of what the living principle within us is made, and if we search in the experience of others, and in the records of past ages, which have been brought down to our times: we will again be struck with the regularity observable in the formation of the many sons of Adam, every where to be discovered. All this proves, how permanent God's counsels are, how fixed his resolutions, how unalterable his judgments! How then shall the impious dare to say, even whilst professing veneration to the Great Being, that his law, which He declared to be his will, should not have been intended as permanent? and that He made decrees, which according to the import of the words of the holy record were to be everlasting, but which were nevertheless to be no longer operative, as soon as the Israelites should at any time cease to be a united people, and be no longer governed by the judicial and purely local ordinances?—Is this what you call honouring your Maker? Is this your religion? Do you thus expect to accomplish the duties demanded of you? How dare, how can you say, that you revere the Unchangeable One, whilst you profess to believe that He has changed? Never may this be the universal opinion of our people; never may the Almighty suffer such ideas to become general. For even admitting that the social laws should be of paramount importance, still they would cease to be regarded, if the ceremonial and devotional ordinances were obliterated from the law-book; for where there is no veneration for the Lord, love to man will speedily die away. And even grant that this should not be, still the inward satisfaction of a holy life would not be felt any more; and from the sick-bed its consolation would be torn; the poor man would lose his comfort; and the oppressed would have nothing left to shield him from despair. Here we are brought to a point at which much more might be said; yes, the mind becomes bewildered at a view of the frightful chaos civilized society would present without the devotional feeling which lies now hidden in the bosom of every man who has at any time enjoyed a religious education; for, believe me, brethren, where the seed has once been sown, no weed, be it ever so noxious, can altogether choke the sacred germ; and its beneficial fruits will ripen one day, though the flowers even may not bud till the tree is hastening to decay, and the canker-worm is ready to devour the tender fruit as soon as formed. To drop the metaphor: religion will show its presence and blessed influence, though it may have lain dormant till man is thrown upon the bed of sickness, and approaching death will barely grant him sufficient time to turn his tearful, repentant eye to Heaven.

Thus much, and more, may be said in favour of acts of worship, even when considering man only as an individual, unconnected with any other one around him. But as a second inducement to a devotional conduct we will exhibit him as a member of society, created not for his own especial benefit and amusement alone, but also for the advancement of the happiness of others. For man, as he exists, has a double existence: one as regards himself, the other as being an integral portion of the human family at large. In the latter capacity, every one of his acts, be they good or bad, must exercise some influence upon the entire mass of men. Not alone is every good act so much positive good added to the common stock of happiness, and every evil deed an absolute diminution therefrom; but every act must likewise serve as an example, if the same be done publicly, or if it leave a trace behind by which it can at some time be made public.—For example: the respect a man pays to his parents is a good act in itself; but a twofold good arises from it, inasmuch as other children are taught to do the same, when they see how much satisfaction the parents of the dutiful child enjoys, and how many blessings are heaped on his head for his filial piety. Now, regardless of the good he does to his parents, he is the cause of making filial obedience loved as a virtue by others; and consequently this act, which is apparently *one*, becomes a twofold deed of virtue.—Again, we have frequently seen, that if a stranger came to a place where the greater part, not to mention the whole, were walking in meekness before the Lord, he was ready to become charmed with their course of life, and was induced to join them in their plans of goodness. Thus, also, where irreligion was predominant, that new-comers commonly chimed in with the opinions entertained by the majority of the inhabitants. And, in fact, so much importance is attached to example even by the opinion of the world, that it is expected as something almost certain, that no one will be long able to resist the force of example set him by his associates.—Worship, then, which from its nature in the Jewish religion must be public, will confer a twofold share of benefit upon society: first, inasmuch as it tends to improve the heart of every man joining in it with sincerity; and, secondly, because the example of one may induce the wavering to become religious, and to confirm the good in their former conduct. And thus so general a feeling of obedience to the will of God may be produced, that it may freely be expected that one will incite the other to acts of piety; and in this manner too a state of harmony and friendship will spring up amidst those united together by one mode of worship, and they will learn, not only their dependence upon God, but also their relation to, and dependence upon, one another. We may therefore maintain, that the observance of the ceremonial law tends preëminently to unite more closely the worshippers of God, and to promote that concord which should subsist between those who hope for the favour of the same Supreme Ruler.—In this outward exhibition of piety there need not be necessarily the least ostentation; for, as already said, worship was intended to be public, and consequently when a man enters this holy house, and worships before this holy shrine, it is not to be presumed upon any slight evidence, that he believes, or that he should wish, the eyes of others to be upon him. No; this cannot be the case where all are alike pious, alike devout, alike intent upon serving the same God, where all simultaneously invoke the protection of the same Redeemer.

Now it is this holy living, this teaching of virtue by precept and example, which we call the *sanctification of the name of the Lord;* and if a man was always careful of his religious conduct as well as moral—if the word of God was to his soul a delight—if the Sabbath of the Lord was to him a pleasure—if the house of worship was the spot which he often visited—if the poor were by him cherished, if the oppressed were by him relieved, if the slandered were by him defended: then he has sanctified the Holy Name as much as though he had died a martyr for the cause of the Lord upon the stake of the persecutor; his soul is then as pure as though his best life's-blood had freely flowed on the scaffold in acknowledging the unity of God and maintaining the truth of his law. And although not every one is called upon to seal his faith as those great ones of former days have done by glorifying their Maker with their death: still the course just described is open to all; for this is a contest in which all can join, and a field in which all can gain an equal share of renown, a vineyard in which all can gather the same rich vintage. In truth, the humblest even has some chance of proving his devotion; if he cannot be bountiful to the poor, he can at least lend his personal aid; and if he cannot teach the world by precept, he can set a good example to those immediately around him; and there is therefore no man living who cannot, if he will, be regardful of the commandment:

ולא תחללו את שם קדשי ונקדשתי בתוך בני
ישראל : ויקרא כב׳ לא׳ :

"And you shall not dishonour my holy name, and I will be sanctified in the midst of the children of Israel." Levi. xxii. 31.

O may we live to see the time, when all men shall be taught to shun sin, when all will love virtue, when all will be animated by the purest love to God, in those days, of which the prophet spoke when saying: "And the earth shall be full of knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Amen.

Iyar 14th. } 5591.
April 27th. }

DISCOURSE XVI.

THE GLORY OF THE LORD.

O Thou, our Father, Lord of heaven and earth, accept in thy grace the humble thanks which we, thy creatures and servants, have offered up to-day in this house consecrated to thy service! Vouchsafe to receive our prayers, and grant us thy supplications, as Thou didst once hearken unto those, that sacrificed before thee on the holy altar in Jerusalem. Bestow on us also, in thy infinite goodness, a knowledge of thy holy ways, as Thou in former days didst enlighten the minds of the people Thou hadst redeemed from slavery, as they, prostrate at thy feet, received the commands of thy mouth in awe and trembling, and shielded by thy majesty! Amen.

Brethren!

We are this day assembled here to celebrate the greatest event, to commemorate the highest of blessings, which the Almighty ever caused to gladden the hearts of thinking men, and especially of that once great people, of which we constitute but a small and feeble remnant. But I will not now enter upon a comparison of our state at the time of the promulgation of the law with our present condition; as I wish not to sadden the hearts of the community on this day of solemn rejoicing by such sad reflections; but I will only revert to a portion of the immeasurable good, which was bestowed on us in particular, and the entire mass of men in general, by the light which was shed over the world by the revelation from Sinai. I advert to the noble conceptions which we in this manner received of the attributes of the Deity, so much elevated above whatever the wisest of the heathens were ever able to discover by the aid of unassisted reason alone. And let me add, that in nothing were we more favourably distinguished above all nations of antiquity, than by the knowledge we received through God himself of his ways with man; and it seems therefore that this day, devoted to commemorate the descent on Sinai, is peculiarly adapted to call up feelings of thanks and devotion for the great good so bountifully bestowed, and of which we can only prove ourselves worthy by a careful attention to the precepts then announced from amidst the fire and thunder by the Almighty himself, without the intervention of human agency. Not alone in the Decalogue, however, but also in other parts of Scripture, do we find the sublimest truth revealed, and among the many there is hardly one more touching, and characteristic of Israel's God, than the following from the *thirty-third* chapter of Exodus, which I wish to offer to your consideration to-day, as particularly appropriate to the festival and its institution:

ויאמר הראני נא את כבדך — ויאמר אני אעביר
כל טובי על פניך : שמות לג׳ יח׳־יט׳:

" And he (Moses) said : Show me, I pray Thee, thy glory ;—and He said, I will let all my goodness pass before thee.'' Exodus xxxiii. 18, 19.

Moses was standing in prayer before God on the summit of Mount Sinai, in the midst of the desert; and his spirit was refreshed by the light of revelation, while he was listening with delight to the precepts which proceeded from the mouth of the Most High; and he enjoyed thus an inexpressible pleasure, scarcely inferior to that which animates the disembodied soul, when she wings her way to Paradise, in holy ecstacy at being sent to scenes of inexhaustible bliss, from before the judgment throne of the everlasting Father.—His indeed had been a happy lot, his had been an eminence rarely reached by mortals; since in prosperity he had never become elated with pride, nor had he ever grown faint-hearted amidst trials and dangers. For, nurtured in the bosom of pleasure in the palace of the Egyptian Pharaoh, his mind had retained its primitive purity, his soul its stainless innocence, and the adopted son of the king's daughter forgot not his brethren that groaned in slavery and degradation. And when as a fugitive from the vindictive sword of Mitzraim's ruler he had been compelled to seek shelter in a foreign land, where, banished from the scenes of his youth, he was not permitted to share the toil even of his own people: his heart found consolation in the goodness of God, in the overruling providence of our Father in heaven. And there also, like other suffering righteous ones, he was taught that the innocent are not forsaken; for in the land of the stranger he found those capable of appreciating honesty and integrity of purpose, and obtained a home in the house of the chief of Midian, who bestowed on him his daughter as a token of his regard.—It was now, whilst tending the flock of his wife's father, that Moses for the first time heard the voice of God resound in his hearing, and from on high he was deputed to effect the liberation of his brothers from slavery and oppression. With fearful signs he was enabled to force conviction upon an obdurate king; and when the task had been accomplished, when Israel had gone forth to freedom, he was acknowledged the chosen prophet and the leader of the people of God; and soon he brought them to the foot of Sinai, where was imparted to them the law, more pure than fire, and more healthful than the spirit of life itself. Who can estimate the awe, the fear, the joy, and the gladness of the people at that awful hour, when they were led forth from the camp, to where the glory of God appeared,—whilst the trumpet sounded—whilst the earth trembled—whilst the mountain smoked;—and more still at that ecstatic moment, when the terrific voice of the Eternal One spoke: "I am the Lord thy God." The mind is lost in admiration of the sublimity of the scene, and our reason is unable to comprehend, how our ancestors must have felt, when they were in truth convinced, that now indeed they were the chosen people, since it was from Heaven that their law was given!—If thus the community at large were enlightened,—if thus hidden things were revealed to them; how much more must he have seen, the man, who alone was called to the summit of the mount! Around him blazed the fiercest fire, but he remained unscathed; under him the earth shook, but his feet were firm; and when all the nation of Israel were unwilling to see the glory of God again revealed to them as it had been that day, fearing they might die, his courage never wavered; for his knowledge of divine things was greater, and his faith in divine protection was firmer, than that of any other mortal; and he beheld, and witnessed all, with an unshaken fortitude and a steady gaze, as though it were a father coming to visit his child, as though it were a fond parent coming to instruct his beloved offspring.

But soon, alas! the scene was changed; the people who had but lately received the law, were misled by folly and presumption, and made themselves a molten calf, "the image of a grass-eating ox," and bowed down to the work of their own hands. "God perceived it and was incensed," to adopt the language of Scripture, and He ordered Moses to go down from Mount Sinai, because the people of Israel, whom he had so lately led forth from Egypt, had sinned. The prophet then descended, and in his hands were the two tables of stone, inscribed by the finger of the Deity with the Ten Commandments, the words of the covenant of the Maker of all with his chosen people. But instead of his service, instead of the adoration of the Protector of their forefathers, he beheld the calf and the dancing, the idol and its senseless worship; and unwilling to deliver to apostates the record of the covenant of everlasting life, he threw from his hands the miraculous tables, and broke them at the foot of Sinai. And in sorrow and indignation he commanded those who had remained faithful, the children of Levi, to revenge the Holy Name that had been profaned, and there fell a multitude who had bowed the knee before the abomination of the people of Egypt. When the most guilty had thus been punished, he went up again on the mount to ask forgiveness for the transgressors, and he remained there forty days and forty nights, without tasting earthly food, to secure preservation for those who had proved themselves so unworthy of God's favour; and his prayer was heard, and the threatened punishment was averted.

It was here, and at this time that Moses, who had seen of God's ways so much more than ever had been before or since revealed to man, asked of the Lord to let him see his glory. Moses had before this beheld the power of God manifested in so many wonderful ways; he had been upheld amidst the threatenings of the greatest dangers; he had heard the words of the Supreme Wisdom, whenever the welfare of Israel required it; more wisdom and knowledge than ever had been conferred on man were his: and yet he confessed by his earnest prayer, that to him too the Deity was a mystery, a mystery beyond what all his knowledge and wisdom could ever hope to reach.—Here let us pause.—"Show me thy glory!" thus prayed the most gifted of mortals; *not he* dared to dive into the secrets of creation; not he ventured to lift his searching view into the nature and essence of God; for amidst all that his mind had conceived, the All-powerful One yet remained hidden, a mystery too great, too holy, to be unravelled; a Being too fearful to be approached by the flights of thought.—If thus Moses acted, how darest thou, presumptuous, ignorant man, endeavour to pry into that which escaped the knowledge of the father of the prophets? weenest thou to be wiser than he, who was by God instructed?—To know what is God—to investigate the nature of his being—are these studies suitable for short-lived man? are these the points to which his inquiries should be directed? when his own being is a secret to him; and when he knows not how his own mind works, shall he direct his search into the Author of his mind?—O how true it is, that only the really wise discover how insufficient their reason, how limited their means of research are!

The object of his second ascent to Sinai had been attained, inasmuch as the transgressions of the sinful people had been remitted, and the punishment denounced against all, inflicted upon the hardened few only: yet Moses lingered in the Sacred Presence, anxious, as said already, for more knowledge, convinced that of his own accord he could not penetrate farther. Impelled by this desire it was, that he asked of the Eternal One: "Show me, I pray Thee, thy glory;" he wanted to become more familiar with the being of the Deity, than a view of outward nature permits to man; he wished to discover why things were organized as they are; to understand, how the power of God works in secret every thing which we perceive by our senses. It was here also, whilst standing on the mount, that he was answered to his prayer by the words of the Almighty: "I will let all my goodness pass before thee." Let it be observed in what manner God granted Moses's wish for extended knowledge. Moses, not satisfied with all he had seen, desired to witness the power of Heaven manifested in a more striking degree than it had been hitherto in his presence; he petitioned for an increased sphere of understanding, conceiving that which he possessed to be as yet incomplete. But he was answered, that to him, as man, no farther knowledge could be granted, and that he must, therefore, not hope for a more extended view of the Divine Being; "for no man," says the text, "can see me and live;" but in lieu of this, he was promised, as something more suitable for human nature, to have the goodness of God more clearly displayed to him, and to be shown more strongly than hitherto, how kind and beneficent are the ways of the Infinite, and Merciful One, towards his creatures! How profound a theme for meditation this presents to our mind! The goodness of God is his glory! for so was Moses taught to satisfy his thirst for farther wisdom and knowledge of the ways of the Lord: Ask we then: "What is God?" we shall discover, that He is good, and that to his kindness alone all owe their being, that to His benevolence all are indebted for their preservation, and that to His providence all are compelled to look for happiness.—"No man can see me and live." No, not whilst our soul is yet entangled in her mortal habiliment can she approach nearer to the Fountain of light—not in this state of decay can she elevate herself above the material world—and not in this life of change and corruption can she comprehend the nature of the Pure Spirit?—But his workings she can discover in the vasty ocean, the star-spangled sky, the murmuring brook, the pathless desert, the howling storm, the leaf-clad forest, in the summer's heat, and the winter's frost; his deeds of grace she can behold, as He provideth sustenance to all that liveth, from the mighty elephant to the minutest insect; and his universal mercy she can view in profound veneration, as his protection is held out over the sinner as well as the righteous; and to Him she can fly for refuge, to Him she can look for consolation, as He is mighty to help, and no one can say to him: "What doest Thou?"—If then, traveller on the midnight road, thou art surrounded by dangers, dangers too great for thee to overcome: reflect that thou art protected by the Father of mercy, and that not a hair from thy head can fall to the ground without his sufferance, and that nought can injure thee, unless permission from Him be given! If even bodily harm should come over thee, if even the ruthless assassin should bare his murdering blade against thy defenceless bosom: turn up thy eye to thy God in undiminished hope, for He is ever with thee, ever good alike, ever kind, and mid suffering and death He can lead thee to immortal happiness.—Suffering brother, who liest on the bed of sickness, whose bones are filled with the pains of a burning disease, whose mouth is parched by the fatal fever, whose tongue cleaves to the palate in speechless agony: do not despair, let thy spirit not flag, for if thou art even called hence, be assured, that He, the Gracious One, will comfort—support—and bless thee, though death has closed thy mortal eye, and stopped the functions of thy decaying body!—But thou too, erring brother, who hast forsaken the path of our God's holy law, who hast by thy acts bid defiance to his all-wise rule, who hast ever striven to gratify the cravings of thy unholy passions;—thou, who now mournest at the thoughts of thy great derelictions, who despairest because of thy iniquity, who art unable to relieve thyself from the horrid torment of the gnawing worm of conscience;—thou, who seest thyself forsaken by all earthly help, and despised by the very associates of thy crimes:—yes, erring brother, even thou despair not, for though much thou hast sinned, although great have been thy transgressions, reflect, that the Creator is much more merciful by far than thy sins are great, that to his beneficence there is no end, and that it would be presumptuous folly to set bounds to His forgiveness! And only return with an unshaken confidence in His goodness, only imagine not thy sins too great to be forgiven, and thou mayest approach the footstool of

Grace with hopes of pardon. And if thou art then chastised according to thy misdeeds, think not thyself rejected, but consider, that our ancestors' ingratitude was forgiven, but that still a moderate punishment was inflicted, to show that although God is merciful, forgives sin and will not destroy, still sin cannot escape without retribution. This is the glory of God which was shown to Moses, and thus it was made manifest to him, how far it is becoming for man to search into the ways of his Creator.

"I will let all my goodness pass before thee," and so indeed it did happen; and the power of God passed before Moses on Mount Sinai, whilst he, the chosen servant, stood in the hollow of the rock at Horeb, and before him was proclaimed: "The Eternal Lord is an everlasting Being, merciful, gracious, long suffering, and abundant in beneficence and truth; keeping kindness unto the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, but who will not suffer sin to go unpunished." This is the revelation of the glory of God, and in this we acknowledge a kind and just Being, who, when forgiving sin, punishes past transgression with paternal chastisement, and thus shows, that there is a discrimination between his adorers and those that forsake his service! Moses, the man of God, saw the cloud in which the glory of the Most High had descended, he heard the attributes of God announced, and he bowed his head, and threw himself prostrate on the ground, adoring and revering his God more than ever, and feeling the presumption of seeking the glory of the Creator in any thing else save his goodness, where indeed is sealed up all the mystery of our being and all the hopes of a glorious futurity, after our departure hence to dwell for ever in a better world.

May the grace and goodness of the Lord be always with you, and protect and comfort you in life and in death. Amen.

Sivan 5th. } 5591.
May 17th. }

Note.—The above address was written, by request of an esteemed friend, as an illustration of the eighteenth and nineteenth verses of the thirty-third chapter of Exodus. It will be perceived, that I have followed the English version, although I am well aware that the word טוב, rendered *goodness*, may also mean *property* or *possession*. Still the selection of this word instead of כבוד, used by Moses, must refer to the quality or attribute of goodness more immediately than to a display of extraordinary power. Add to which, that Moses had asked to be made acquainted with God's ways; to which he was answered, that the Lord would be merciful to those He thought deserving,—implying, that it is not for man to ponder too much upon God's government.—This discourse is merely a sketch, an illustration more than a commentary, and, consequently, its brevity and apparent want of connexion must not be too severely judged. The limits of a note will not permit me to say more, besides the text must speak for itself.

DISCOURSE XVII.

THE DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

Glory and adoration to our everlasting King and almighty Ruler. Amen.

Brethren!

Of all things which we call certain, and upon the coming of which we confidently rely in our earthly career: nothing is more certain, nothing more inevitable, than the close of this career, the death of the body.—In every undertaking, no matter how well every thing may have been arranged, if even so, as almost to preclude disappointment, disappointment may nevertheless ensue, and mar the confident hopes of the deceived expectant; but unless the miraculous hand of God interferes, to snatch his servants from the jaws of death, as it happened with Enoch and Elijah, no human being can escape the return to dust; for no human power is able to avert the impending dissolution of the bodily organs, or to oppose aught to the severing of the mind from matter. It has been so decreed, ever since our first progenitors sinned in Eden, that man should be mortal, subject to decay and corruption, and that however long the day of death be delayed, come it must, nay, perhaps unawares, like the thief in the night, who enters the defenceless and unwatched dwelling, when no one expects or dreads his coming.—It behoves us, therefore, and every other member of Adam's sinful race, to reflect on: What is life? what is death?—what influence have both upon the constitution and nature of man? Life, to judge from our experience, is the state of existence in which created beings act and suffer; and death is the state, when the body of these creatures ceases to act, and cannot, to appearance, be benefitted or harmed by the acts of others. But this is true of the body only, and in this man is similar to the beast, for that too acts while it lives, and is beyond the power of harm when dead.—Yet, if this were all of life that belongs to man, not so much anxiety were needed to endeavour to obtain comforts and to obviate evil; not then would it be matter of importance to acquire a knowledge of more than our eyes can behold or the ears hear; not then would it be proper, that men should traverse the trackless ocean in quest of the products of foreign climes; not then would it be useful to restrain the passions, and protect one from the evil intentions of the other; since the mere clay, which must perish, and perish too before the thousandth part of all its desires is satisfied, deserves not more care than the beast of the field or the bird of heaven requires, that takes its food wherever it finds it, and that dies as soon as the animal functions cease to operate from inward decay, or when it falls a prey to the cupidity of man or the cunning and superior strength or address of other animals. But in addition to the experience derived from bodily sensations, and the ideas acquired by means of the outward organs, there is a feeling within us, a monitor, which teaches, that life is not confined to outward, bodily actions, and that death is not the extinction of the vital spark.—For if we pursue a train of thought, we will soon discover, that although as men, our ideas are inseparable from matter in the various shapes in which it exists, we are yet able to extend our search beyond the objects which come immediately under our view or of which we have any particular knowledge from personal experience, and that in fact very often our greatest joys and our most poignant afflictions are produced by imagination and reflection. What, I ask, has this thought, unconnected with any particular outward object, to do with the dull, inert, selfish mass of clay of which our outward forms are made? Is it in the power of mere sentient matter to erect, so to speak, a structure of imagery to delight or depress the feeling? In what manner could the animal sensation of the human system enable us to go beyond ourselves from a serious contemplation of nature—and next, to let this view of nature exert a permanent influence over us, so much so perhaps as to induce us even to change the line of conduct upon which we have been hitherto acting? And is it not notorious, that many a careless person has had his attention arrested, and has been roused to reflection by contemplating, in moments of joy or sadness, the great works of the supreme Architect? "But truly there is a spirit within men, and the mind of God maketh them wise;" this we are told by the sacred writer, and this our experience, the child of *mental* reflection, teaches, and in this our nature is infinitely elevated above that of the brute; and it is by the operations of mind and not of matter that we are taught to feel that we are creatures of a merciful God, and that to Him our spirit returneth, when its connexion with the perishable body is dissolved.—Life, therefore, is the connected existence of a divine spirit with an animal body, which compound state enables man to do whatever is necessary for his self-preservation, and to judge at the same time of things presented to the consideration of his mind, which mind, however, is restrained from having a correct and perfect view in all cases of the nature and object of things, since it is encumbered with sensual organs which from their constitution are disqualified from comprehending aught essentially different from a bodily substance. And death is the dismemberment of this connexion, by which the body is rendered unfit for the farther service of the soul, and by which the latter is freed from the encumbrance of the clay; and which dissolution renders her exempt from calamities and circumstances attendant upon bodily organs. If this is admitted to be the nature of man, his life and his death: it follows that, since death is not the annihilation of the human system, life—so called—is a state of preparation, in which it is our business to endeavour to acquire the means necessary to fit us for the impending altered state of existence; unless one could persuade himself that human life had been so admirably organized without any reference to an ulterior object. When, however, we look inquiringly into nature, we shall find that nothing is without its object; since even to our obscured reasoning powers the causes of many things, animate and inanimate, are apparent, and we are able to show how they are connected link by link with the great universal principle which pervades all. To judge then from analogy, human life also has its ulterior object, and it remains to be discovered what this may be; or in other words, we ought to inquire: "What course are we to pursue, according to the instruction of our Creator, that we may be ready and prepared for the altered state of existence for which we are destined?" If now we had not a revelation of God to guide us, if we had no conception of his intentions, we might live the brief space allotted to us according to the impulse of our feelings: we might then presume that actions prompted by the outward senses are the proper deeds, by which we can prepare ourselves for the future. But we have a revelation of God's will, we have a system of rules from the All-wise Father, which were evidently instituted for our benefit: and we maintain therefore that it is the law of the Lord which points out to us the means we are to employ to prepare ourselves for death. Let us then look into the book of revelation, let us examine the records of God's wisdom, and the testimony of his rule on earth: and we shall be informed that it is his wish that every man should inherit happiness, and be deserving of unchangeable satisfaction, with this only condition, that each and every member of the human family should earn this happiness for himself by his own acts, or regain the same by a sincere repentance and an humble submission to divine dispensation, in case he has thoughtlessly lost sight for a time of the path of righteousness. For although to sin is contrary to our happiness, still the Almighty will graciously accept a forsaking of the evil; inasmuch as our nature is not free from evil inclination, nor our mind at all times fit to understand the ways of Providence; and as thus sinning, even with forethought, may proceed from ignorance and inattention, God will not utterly reject the transgressor, because He is great and cognizant of our weakness; since, as we have said, while the soul is yet connected with the body, she is prevented from having a perfect and correct view of the nature of all things, owing to her receiving her impressions through means of material organs, which from their very constitution are unable to comprehend things essentially different in their composition from the qualities of matter. This being the case in our state of mixed existence, of flesh and spirit, it is not to be wondered at that, misled by appearance, we may be induced, unless we guard ourselves carefully, to regard that as important which is really trifling, and even to mistake the evil for the good. If then we act from these erroneous impressions, trusting to our knowledge and judgment as efficient guides, it is almost necessary that we should be led into innumerable errors, and practise the evil instead of the good, and offend our heavenly King by the wickedness of our works. But if we, fully alive to our imperfections and watchful over the persuasions of bodily organs, firmly resolve to be guided by the instructions of divine revelation: it is necessary that we should become virtuous, nay more, that we should be enabled to go counter to our natural impulses, if they interfere with the dictates of God's will; and we may thus be rendered righteous, as far as being righteous is compatible with our nature.

And since now death is the aim and termination of earthly life, since from the moment of our birth we verge onward to eternity: how sweet must be the departure of him who, having always the certain end in view, invariably acted in a manner calculated to enable him to enter into the impending altered state of being, into the more immediate presence of God, free from the faults which the holy law interdicts!—Imagine to yourselves, brethren, the righteous laid on the bed of his last sickness, think of him how his peace is made with God and men, how serenely and tranquilly he may look upon death, which will once more and indissolubly unite him with his Father—see him, how his eye is unclouded, whilst all around him weep—imagine this, and then answer me, is not such a death an object worth living for? Who will say a long life is misspent, when such an end crowns the suffering mortal, when it is almost evident, even to us, that immortal glory awaits him?—But reverse the picture, and behold the careless sinner, to whom it always appeared that the gratification of the senses was the greatest good, to whom the acts of religion seemed unmeaning deeds of slavish worship, to whom it could not be made intelligible that the providence of God watches over every act and thought, to reward or punish after death, as well as during life: see him, how the blush of shame at last mantles on his cheek, confounded at his now exposed sins; behold him standing in speechless degradation before his earthly judges, who will condemn him to the solitary prison for the wrong done to his neighbour's property, or order him to execution for having dyed his hands in a brother's blood; or if he even be not publicly exposed, but suffered to drag on a miserable existence, a burthen to himself and an intolerable load to others, since, go where he will, his awakened conscience will smite him, will disturb his waking and sleeping thoughts: imagine, brethren, such a sinner at his end, and what must his sensations be! He regards himself as despised of men, forsaken by God, and abhorred by himself—and yet, he must hence, no longer respite can be granted; justice will be satisfied; death will have his prey; and oh! the guilty one passes away, a spectacle, an example, a by-word to others; the crowd is admonished to take warning of his ignominious end, historians will dwell on his horrible agonies, his unmitigated sufferings, his dreadful imprecations; and speak, who would not willingly undergo the greatest bodily pains, if assured that his departure should be smoothed by faith, and be made free from such trials? And yet we see persons who run the course of vice, exposing themselves thus voluntarily to ignominy and shame; but this is owing to their forgetting that they are mortal, and because they imagine that, when they have succeeded in veiling their misdeeds from public view, they have nothing to apprehend from the interference of Providence: when they should know that to God they must return whether they deny his superintendence or not, and render an account before Him, the Judge, from whom naught is concealed, and to whom the past, the present, and the future are alike known! But the righteous considers well, that "he is dust, and to dust he must return," and knows that God observes all his ways; he therefore trains his mind betimes to an obedience to the will of Heaven, and when his hour of departure then arrives, he descends to the grave, like the refulgent sun into the silvery ocean at the close of a serene summer's day, shedding with his last ray a glorious, mellow, and hallowed light, as he becomes gradually concealed from the enraptured view of the admiring beholder!—It was inspired by feelings of this nature, influenced by a knowledge of the beneficial effects of the divine law, that the heathen prophet, Bileam, spoke by the inspiration of the Almighty's sacred mind, as follows:

תמת נפשי מות ישרים ותהי אחריתי כמהו :
במדבר כג׳ י׳

"May my soul die the death of the righteous, and may my end be like his." Numb. xxiii. 10.

It is indeed for such an end that we are to work and exert our energies; for what is all the happiness that may fall to our lot on this earth, if we are at last to perish away like the beast of the field, or what would be almost worse, if it were not that existence even under suffering is better far than non-existence, to be doomed to punishment after death for a period which our sins may demand from the justice of God? Well must it be for each of us, if we take our life and its close daily and hourly into consideration, if we suffer neither prejudice nor self-love to blind us, and to persuade us to close our eyes upon our failings and transgressions. We are but too apt to turn away our view from the consequences of one act, for we say, it is but a single folly; but every folly, every fault, every sin, will disqualify us in some respect from relishing the good and holy; and where is the necessity of purchasing salvation by repentance, when we can enjoy ease of mind and the good-will of God and men by a uniform virtuous conduct? To repent when we have sinned, to fly to the arms of our merciful Father in sincere confidence of his forgiveness, shows a filial devotion to the Almighty, which should be encouraged in every instance upon the discovery of an aberration from the righteous way. But as repentance is at best but a remedy, it must be evident, that it would be far better to adhere always to the law; since if we act otherwise, we may be overtaken by death before we have time to alter our course; and whom can we blame for our dying with all our sins on our head, with all our follies unforgiven, except it be ourselves, who, careless of our spiritual welfare, disregard the warning voice which daily speaks to us, by the example of others, that life is short, and its termination uncertain?—Besides this great advantage of a uniform virtuous life, there is yet another, which is, that it makes the person so acting always beloved by all the world; and when the good depart, no matter what age they may have reached, their place will always seem unfilled by any one of those left behind; and when an excellent person is removed, it strikes us as though something necessary to our comfort had been withdrawn. We do not pity the death of the good, for we feel that their happiness is well secured; but we lament for ourselves, that we can no longer enjoy their example and be improved by their precepts. But let the wicked die, how it almost makes us shudder to think of their pain, their inglorious perishing; and an involuntary feeling of anguish will come over us, and we must bemoan their unhappiness, although compelled to acknowledge, that the world has gained by their removal from amongst active beings, since now they have it no longer in their power to harm others and to injure themselves by their deeds of wickedness.—This is but a small portion of the difference existing between the death of the righteous and of the wicked; but the few distinguishing traits here exhibited will doubtless be enough to demonstrate the superiority of virtue over vice, although there were no greater pre-eminence in the former over the latter.

Although it is unbecoming to make personal allusions to the faults of any individual in a public address, I do not apprehend that any objection can be made to my passing a deserved tribute of respect to the worth of a departed friend, one to whom nearly, if not all of those who now hear me, used to pay the homage due to age and virtue. I speak of our excellent sister,* whom we followed this week to the grave. She lived long, and perhaps as happily, as but few mortals can ever expect to live. But she deserved this long life and this happiness, for during all the period of eighty and five years, the breath of slander dared never to fasten upon her, and under all the trials to which she was exposed in common with all the rest of mankind, she exhibited the fortitude well becoming a daughter of Israel, who knows her God, and knows too, that to confide in Him is the best support. And also the esteem of all who became acquainted with her was cheerfully yielded, and unless I am much deceived, there are few or none, that did not admire her social and religious virtues, and by whom she was not regarded with filial reverence. But at last the hour of her dissolution came, and although the close of her life was painful, yet in mercy the illness that preceded it was of but few days' duration; and full of years and honours, we consigned her to the tomb, there to sleep till the Father of all wakens the slumberers in the dust to everlasting life and happiness.—Should not the example of this excellent person animate us to imitate her good deeds, and endeavour to avoid any errors (since all mortals are liable to err) which we may discover in her ways? Such a line of conduct will render us good and religious, and insure us the favour of God and the love of men. Perhaps, however, the uniform prosperity of our late sister may not attend every one of us; but we ought to consider, that not for reward should we be good, but that through weal and wo we are bound to adhere to our righteousness, taking the law of God as our guiding-star to the haven of happiness; so that, living faithfully in the faith and fear of the Lord, we may at the last be able to breathe out our spirit as did the righteous men of old, and deserve, that our end should be like theirs, untrammelled by sin, and freed from the pollution to which our mortal body and sinful propensities may have inadvertently exposed us.

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* The late Mrs. Rebecca Phillips, widow of Jonas Phillips, and daughter of David Mendes Machado, formerly Reader of the Congregation Shearith Israel in New York, who died about the year 5510 (1750).—This excellent woman lived to an age exceeding eighty-five years, and departed this life on Tuesday the 10th of Tamuz, in the year 5591, corresponding with 21st of June, 1831.

May the God of our fathers bless us all with his grace, and render our life free from intense bodily suffering, and give us every day our necessary support, so that we may be exempt from corroding care and temptation to sin; and when the hour of our death has come, may He make easy for us our departure hence, and, receiving us in favour, bestow on us the undying light of his presence, and the reward which He has laid by for those who confide in Him, and observe his statutes. Amen.

Tamuz 12th. } 5591.
June 23d. }

DISCOURSE XVIII.

THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL.

Protector of Israel! comfort thy people in their mourning, and pardon their transgressions, and lighten the pressure of their burden, and remove the shame which they now suffer among nations. And O, send the angel of mercy to heal their wounds, and redeem them from destruction, and say to them in the words of thy inspired one: "I have found a ransom!" Amen.

Brethren!

Of all virtues, which grace human nature, patriotism is one which possesses something so holy, a certain approach to angelic disinterestedness, that we may freely say, that, next to assisting an enemy in the hour of his distress, it is the noblest feeling in which we can indulge. I allude not to the ambition which assumes the garb of patriotism, merely to elevate itself to distinction in the state; I speak not of the murderous lust, which animates the soldier of fortune in his search of an imperishable name by deeds of daring and violence; but of him, who stands forth in his country's defence, when danger approaches, regardless of consequences; and of the inobtrusive citizen who in his humble sphere yields every thing —life, liberty, and wealth—in the service of his home, his own native land; for he only is a true patriot to whom can be awarded the merit of loving his country for its own sake, but not for the purpose of obtaining lucre, power, or renown.—Let such a patriot be ever so distant from the home of his childhood, ever so far from the land of his birth, to it his mind will revert; nay, though his countrymen have treated him with ingratitude or undeserved wrong, he will still be willing to act the part of a good citizen, despite of the ill-treatment he may have encountered. And the exile too will think with fond regret of the spot, where his parents repose in their graves, to the place, where he first indulged in his youthful plays; and no land upon earth can awaken in him those feelings of ardour and devotion, which his native soil calls up within his bosom.—If we apply these general principles to our own particular condition, it behoves us to inquire: "Which is the country that the collective nation of Israelites can call their own land?" Is it this land, where freedom dwells? Is it the land of the Spaniard, where the name of freedom is almost unknown? Is it the wide desert of Central Asia, where the barbarous Tartar feeds his countless herds? Is it the country, where the Russian despot rules with tyrannic sway?—No! no! it is the favoured land of the East, where the Israelites dwelled of yore, it is the land which God covenanted to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, and to their seed after them; it is the land of the Lebanon, which the dying prophet desired so ardently to see; it is the land, where the once beautiful Jerusalem yet stands although in ruins; it is the land, where stood in olden days the sacred temple, resplendent once in all the beauty of holiness, but which our transgressions, alas! caused to be twice destroyed, when our people fell into the hand of their enemies! This is the land which is the Israelite's home, and he should always regard himself as having an interest in its soil, although he has been born in exile, in the country of the stranger, far from the banks of the lovely Jordan; for there it was, where our national glory reached its highest elevation, and because we have remained scattered and disunited, ever since we were driven thence.—Do not misunderstand me as saying, that you should not regard the country in which you live as your own, and that you should not endeavour to serve it according to the best of your abilities; for we are commanded by the prophet, speaking in the name of God, "to seek the peace of the city to which we have been banished." As Jews, therefore, and believers in the revealed law and the prophets, we are bound to obey the laws of the land and to uphold the authorities in every instance, where their edicts are not at variance with the commandments of God. Every Israelite is accordingly obliged to contribute to the maintenance of the state, and it would be unpardonable in any one to endeavour to avoid paying the government dues by any fraudulent device whatsoever. In inculcating, therefore, a love for Palestine, it must by no means be understood as in any manner teaching and enforcing a diminished love for our present abode; nay more, according to our rules, it is wrong to offend against the laws of even a despotic country; how much more then ought we to observe this regulation in this and other countries, where we have a small share in the legislation, by having the equal right to vote for the representatives of the people, who enact the laws.—Still, as we have said in the beginning of these remarks, the home of the Israelite is the distant land of Moria, where the glory of the Lord used to shine and instruct the children of his choice; and if we take but a rapid view of our national history, it can be readily shown that we have lost much by having been hurried from the boundaries of our own—our father-land.

After the flood had swept away the sinful race of men from the surface of the earth, and left Noah alone with his family to repeople the earth: we find that those born after this catastrophe learnt in an incredibly short time to dispense with the service of God, undeterred by the destruction of their predecessors, and they worshipped the most disgusting creatures of their fancy; nay, that their apostacy proceeded so far as to make it dangerous for any one to avow his attachment to the Creator. It was then that a man arose in the land of Chaldea, whose name was Abram, the ancestor, as you all know, of our people, who acknowledged and worshipped the Most High alone, the Maker of heaven and earth. The patriarch, ordered by Him he adored, left his native land and his father's house, and wandered unto the neighbourhood of Hebron in the land of Canaan, where he erected an altar and spread abroad the light which was within him, and he taught an ignorant people the knowledge of that Being, to whom alone their reverence was due. Now it must be observed, that it was this same land, at present known under the name of Palestine, which God promised to him as an inheritance for his descendants; and He told him, that they should return to it, after a temporary absence, at the expiration of four centuries, and be left in the quiet possession of it, whilst they observed the covenant and precepts of the Lord. It therefore came to pass, that when the Israelites, the descendants of Abraham by his grandson Jacob, surnamed Israel, had been released from Egypt, a deputation of the people entered the land of Canaan, exactly at the expiration of the appointed time, to survey the country they were ordered to conquer. And when they had been led through the wilderness for a period of forty years, under the guidance of Moses, detained so long for their rebellion ten times repeated, and for the sake of fortifying them in faith towards the Lord: they were led by Joshua, the servant and disciple of Moses, over the Jordan into the land promised unto their ancestors. Here they dwelt for the space of nine hundred years, governed by their own laws, administered by men chosen by and from amongst themselves. And here too they might have dwelt for ever, with none to make them afraid, if they had been mindful of the covenant, and had observed the statutes which alone were the firm foundation of their commonwealth. But, for the law of God they substituted the dictates of their own fancy; and following the example of other nations, they worshipped idols, things that could not save, and eventually neglected altogether the precepts of the law.—It had been foretold to them by Moses, that apostacy should be followed by expulsion from their lovely inheritance; and they had, therefore, every reason to expect the threatened punishment as the instantaneous consequence of their transgression. But the Father of mercy, knowing the weakness of human nature, delayed his anger for a long time; and to warn the people, and in order to recal them from their errors, He sent men, inspired by superior knowledge and renowned for their piety, to incite their sinning brethren to repentance; but all was in vain; for if even one generation returned and sought the Lord, the succeeding one added wicked sinfulness to the apostacy of their predecessors; till at length it became an act of mercy to expel the children of Jacob from their land, to obviate by the timely punishment the utter estrangement of the chosen people of God. It therefore happened, that the kingdom of Israel, so called, was subverted by the Assyrians, who drove away the inhabitants to the cities of Media and to other places, and substituted in their stead various foreign tribes, all subject to the sway of the Assyrian king.—The kingdom of Judah, composed of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, together with the Levites, who had been banished from the rival state, ought now to have taken warning at the example of awful retribution exhibited before their eyes. In fact, Hezekiah, son of Ahaz, king of Judah, rejected his father's idolatry, and governed the people in piety, a worthy successor of his glorious ancestor, David; he re-established the holy worship; and in his days it was really that the prophecy of Isaiah, in calling the child, expected at the time when Ahaz was threatened by the kings of Israel and Syria, "the Prince of Peace" was fulfilled, and it seemed that the favour of God had again been bestowed on the exhausted land. But the pious king was gathered unto his fathers, and all the good accomplished by him was more than counterbalanced by his unworthy son Menasseh, and by all the succeeding kings, with the sole exception of Josiah, who was, as we are told, sincerely repentant, a true adorer of God, and an enemy to all apostacy. The punishment, therefore, so long denounced, could now be no longer averted; and when, under the reign of Zedekiah, the last king of David's line, the measure of our sins was nearly overflowing, Nebuchadnezzar, permitted by the justice of Heaven, conquered the holy city, and led the remainder of the Israelites, that had escaped the slaughter, captives to Babylon, and he left none but the poorer classes, who however soon fled to Egypt, to escape the dreaded vengeance of the Babylonians for the murder of Gedaliah. Thus was the strength of Israel broken; thus was all that was grand and beautiful demolished, and Palestine, once so populous and powerful, was left without an inhabitant; till at length God inclined the heart of Cyrus, king of Persia, to mercy, and he permitted the Jews to return and to rebuild their city and temple. Let us observe, that by this return of the captives, the Israelitish nation was not restored; since the ten tribes, who formerly had composed the kingdom of Israel, were yet left in banishment; and to this day the researches of travellers and wise men have not been able to trace their fate; and we are unable to tell whether they are living in some remote land as firm adherents of the God of their fathers, whose chastening hand they have felt; or whether they have, mingling with the nations, learned to do as they do, and are now a part of the wild Afghans or some other barbarous tribe. This deplorable dismemberment, the consequence of the crimes of our ancestors, followed in the train of the destruction of the first temple; and where has been, since that period, the pomp and glory of David and Solomon's reign? the distinguished religious knowledge of the days of Hezekiah? or the fervent zeal displayed by all classes under Josiah? and when had we the wise admonitions of the prophets? or the animating strains of the Psalmists after the rebuilding of the temple?—But this second temple was nevertheless in a measure much more glorious than the first; since, during the period of its existence, the name of the Lord became more known to the nations of the earth, and even the enemies of the Jews were, by their intercourse with them, taught a purer law, and they caught a glimpse as it were of the blessed truths which are contained in our code. The false ideas of Grecian philosophers with regard to the divine nature received a shock from which they have never recovered, by the translation, and consequent farther diffusion, of the Pentateuch by the seventy elders under the Egyptian king, Ptolemy Lagos; and thus it was verified, that "the glory of the second house should be greater than that of the first" built by Solomon, the outward splendour of which far surpassed that of the one erected by the handful of exiles, whom Cyrus permitted to revisit their desolate land. Add to which, that idolatry, as a national crime, was unknown during the entire period under discussion, and that the individual zeal of a great number of pious persons was now continually exerted to preserve the law unmixed, by multiplying copies of the same and expounding obscure texts: and we have enough to assert, that the prediction of the prophet was literally accomplished.—But amid all this greatness, crime made again its baleful inroads upon our state; and the barter for the sacred office of high-priest; the streams of innocent blood that deluged the streets of Jerusalem; the dissension of parties; the calling in of the Romans to settle domestic disputes for the supreme rule: all, all, tended to sap the foundation of the edifice, and once more the structure of the Jewish state was pulled down, and every thing was overwhelmed in one vast, dreadful, annihilation! Yes, it was under the Roman emperors, that year after year the independence of the Jews was circumscribed within narrower limits: till the people were goaded into revolt during the reign of Nero, and the protracted war that ensued did not cease, till Jerusalem was demolished, and the temple laid in ashes! In a discourse of last year, I endeavoured to sketch in few words the horrors of this war, the obstinacy of the defence, and the unremitting activity of the assailants! But what tongue can describe the misery, the agony, and the painfulness of the unavailing struggle, when the devoted and heroic defenders at length saw the walls broken, and the enemy pouring in through every breach; and when they, the famished, after having in vain attempted to stem the onward torrent, by exposing their breasts to the merciless invaders, beheld the temple—for which all their energies had been exerted—committed to the flames; and when they saw the devouring, unquenchable fire seize on the holy of holies, and the unwavering priests of the Lord perish at the steps of the altar, which even in death they would not forsake?—This happened on the ninth of Ab, a day marked for the unfortunate events which befel our people, and on it the sun of Israel set; and the contest after this time was merely the last throb of the expiring heart which ceased at length to beat, after the mortal shafts of the enemy had pierced it to the core. It were well if we could say, that, with the destruction of our metropolis, the fury of the Romans had been appeased; but no, they even unsheathed their swords and plunged them deep into the lifeless corse, for those that had escaped the famine, the sword, and the conflagration which devastated their native land, were exposed to new cruelties by their ruthless captors; some were kept to struggle with wild beasts for the amusement of the refined Romans in their hours of leisure, and others were reserved for a worse fate even, since they were sold as slaves in distant lands; and they, who had been reared amid luxury and elegance, were compelled to bend their necks beneath the yokes of their new Egyptian task-masters! Was not this a dreadful fulfilment of the denunciation of Moses, who said: "And the Lord will bring thee back to Egypt in ships—and you shall be offered there for sale as male and female slaves, and there shall be no buyers?" Thus, my brethren, were our unfortunate people treated, because they had not served their God in sincerity; and for refusing obedience to his mild sway, they were trodden under foot and spurned, and their sorrow even scoffed at, by those whom He brought over them as the instruments of his righteous wrath and indignation! And ask we: "What was the subsequent fate of the Jews?" we shall be answered by the history of many dark centuries, that they were carried into every corner of God's earth, and that in every spot, where they obtained a place of refuge, persecution overtook them, and they were surrendered to scorn, to pillage, to stripes, to torture, and to the scaffold.—Have we not then cause to mourn? are we not bound, as members of the Jewish nation, to pay the patriot's homage to our far-off land? and what tribute can we offer, but our sorrow for the overthrown walls, our grief for the devastated homes, and our tears for the countless millions who fell manfully fighting for their land, and for the altars of their God;—and for those who were butchered, because they were descendants of the proscribed race;—and for those, who bled on the scaffold, because they could not be base hypocrites enough to deny the truth of the everlasting covenant of the Mosaic law?—But, asks one: "Why shall we mourn at this distance from Palestine, and after the lapse of so many centuries? what can that regret avail which we breathe forth in our Synagogues and houses? will this reunite the Israelites? will this rebuild the temple?"—To a truly feeling mind, to a heart alive to the sublimities of the heavenly law, no answer need be made to such questions, for it were useless to illustrate that which to pious men explains itself. But we will speak to him, who perhaps may waver, and whose heart is not entire with the Lord; perhaps the labour may be rewarded by our succeeding to draw into our circle another brother to unite with the mourners for Zion!—It is asked; "Why shall we regret Jerusalem in a land where universal freedom reigns?" But let me ask in return: Do all Israelites dwell here? where is the multitude, who yet suffer every indignity in the country of the impious ruler of Russia, who dares to style himself self-ruler, as though he were not amenable to God's tribunal for his deeds of oppression? are those Israelites free, who in Spain and Portugal are not permitted to avow their descent even, except it be under the protection of a feigned apostacy? Yes, brethren, unless Jews in all countries of the world had equal freedom, this objection cannot bear the semblance of reason, for none can be bold enough to assert, that the Israelites are saved by being at rest in one, or a few countries at most, whilst every where else they are suffering and oppressed. But even suppose, that in the process of time the march of civilization were to break down the walls of prejudice, and induce all the rulers of the earth to place Jews upon a perfect equality with their other subjects or citizens: even then, I say, we should have cause to observe, annually, the day of the destruction of Jerusalem as a day of humiliation and fasting, since under the most favourable aspect of things, we cannot indulge the hope, that we shall be permitted to be governed by our own laws; and let happen what will, we can never form our scattered remains into one united society, till it pleases God to restore us to our land; and thus be we *slaves* or *citizens*, as Jews we should ever regard the non-possession of Palestine as a great national evil, which we cannot enough deplore. For let us ask: "Where is the temple—where the public sacrifices—where the imposing worship on the Day of Atonement—where the outpouring of the divine inspiration through the Urim and Thummim? Where, again, are the august Sanhedrin—where can we find the simple, just, and prompt judgment of the Mosaic code?"—All, all, has been lost by the destruction of Jerusalem and by the dispersion of the tribes of Jacob!

Again, it is asked: "Why should we mourn at this distance of time?" But let me ask in return: Does distance of time lessen the evil? Are we less exiles, because we have been exiles for nearly eighteen hundred years? or, do you wish it said, that Jews have lost their national feelings because they no longer live in Palestine, and because the punishment inflicted has been so long continued on account of their obduracy in not repenting? But the time has not yet come, when it can be said with truth, that we have ceased to feel like Jews, and let us breathe the fervent hope, that such a time may never come. And I appeal to you all, brethren, whether you are not always affected with sorrow at hearing, that in any quarter of the globe our brethren are oppressed. What proves this, but that no time nor place can reconcile us, not even the most careless, to be indifferent spectators of the maltreatment of the Jew as such; and should we not then mourn for the event, which was the beginning of all these oft-repeated calamities?

And in reference to the last objection: "What good can this regret do? Can it rebuild the temple, or reunite the Israelites?" We reply, that much good may result to the Jewish community, by their turning unitedly every year to the state of their former splendour and glory, with a regret which such sad reflection is calculated to call up; for it must tend to bind all closely together, when every one feels, that he is in truth a member of a noble people, and that all the evil effects of distance of time and place, of scorn, of difficulties, of temptations, have been, and will always be unable to sever those sacred ties, which bind the Israelites, individually and collectively to their Father in heaven. If, then, our regret cannot rebuild the temple, it will keep the religion of our forefathers alive and active in our hearts; if our sorrow cannot reunite the nation in *one* land, it will at least link together the hearts of all believers, be they ever so far separated by oceans, by deserts, by the eternal snows of the pole, or the burning sand of Africa's inhospitable clime. More than this need not be urged in reply to the foregoing objections; for if religion is not entirely absent from the mind, the short explanations given must be amply sufficient to remove them.

Let us then, brethren, unite from year to year, whilst we live in foreign lands, to pay the patriot's tribute, the exile's tear, to the deserted homes of our ancestors; and let us devote the days of fasting appointed by the prophets, to mourn over the fallen glory of Jacob that has departed, over the sun of Israel that has set.—But no! the sun of Israel has not set—for ever; true, his light is now veiled, his rays we seek in vain with our agonized vision; his warmth no more quickens the blood in our veins. Yet the time, nevertheless, will come, when he will shine forth again with redoubled splendour; when his light will be seven-fold to what it was before its obscuration, when nations will bask in his beams, and foreign climes be quickened into eternal life by his refulgence.—But, alas! for our sinful people, they delay the time of salvation by their thoughtlessness; they care not for the promised redemption; nay, some even hug the chains of their slavery, and say: "We wish not freedom." Can we then wonder, that the anger of God is yet burning? Can we be surprised, that our misfortunes are renewed from time to time, when we trust to the aid of men for emancipation, as we are willing to call it, and accept our birthright as a boon from the hands of our former enemies, and forget that it is God who procures us enlargement? Have we any right to complain of persecution, when we are ever ready to break the laws, as soon as the bonds of servitude are a little loosened—when we are always glad to escape from the burdens of religion, so soon as the chains of the oppressor are rendered somewhat less galling? And add to this ingratitude towards God, the want of love one Jew feels for the other; and see how little unanimity exists even in the small councils of our scattered communities; and observe how apt and willing every one is to play the tyrant in his little circle, when he is raised to authority; and the want of obedience, which many display to wholesome regulations, enacted for the government of the congregations: and then answer me, what kind of commonwealth could be formed out of such materials? No, God is just, it is ourselves who retard our happiness; it is we ourselves, who delay the day of salvation. But as there are, thanks be to God, always some in every country, in every town, nay, perhaps in every house, in whose heart there are seated piety, resignation, meekness, and brotherly love, so also will the hour of favour for our deliverance arrive, though tardily. And how can we fear of its not coming on account of the delay? Some fearful heart shudders at the idea of eighteen hundred years of exile; but, trembler! what are a thousand years in the eyes of God, but "as the day that passeth, as the watch of a night?" Again we must consider, that our captivity has been of incalculable benefit to mankind. Look around you: a knowledge of our holy law is spreading—in every country some rays of light are penetrating; and to what other cause can this change be attributed, but to the influence of the law, which was given through Moses, and which has become more known, more admired, and more followed by the nations of the earth, since we have been captives? Our enemies hated us, but they were enlightened by us, and our wounds opened to them the fountain of light and happiness.—Am I asserting more than the experience of every one teaches him? Who can be so blinded as not to acknowledge this self-evident truth? Away, then, with that faintheartedness, which is a greater enemy to our belief, than either the destruction of Jerusalem or the persecution of the dark ages; for whilst our hope is undiminished, whilst our faith in God's salvation remains unbroken, no power on earth is able to injure in the least the existence of our religion. But let once the insidious misgivings of fear, which others are so anxious to instil in us, be listened to with complacency: and it is as certain, as any thing which has not yet come to pass, that our nation is then nigh its dissolution. But is there a Jew who would not exert all his energy, no matter how little soever his acts may be in accordance with the law, to prevent the extinction of our heroic, suffering people? Who would not deplore the injury which the world at large would suffer, if the inheritors of the revelation of the Most High should have ceased to be an evidence of his wisdom and an example to all mankind?—Let us therefore all be united in our regret, and let us never forget that we, as descendants of Israel, have a temple to weep for, and a conquered and oppressed people to bemoan; but while thus mourning, let us not waver in our hopes, nor despair of God's goodness, even if our career on earth be closed before the promised salvation approaches. We have seen that punishment always followed sin, and that Israel was nevertheless at no time left entirely at the mercy of the foeman. Can any one then doubt, that the other prophecies will be fulfilled as well as those which have already been accomplished? And truly, brethren, we may say, that if ever hope was well founded, if ever confidence ought to visit the human breast, it is the hope which we feel, it is the confidence which animates us; for we are promised by the prophet:

ופדויי ה׳ ישבון ובאו ציון ברנה ושמחת עולם על
ראשם ששון ושמחה ישיגו ונסו יגון ואנחה :
ישע׳ לה׳ י׳ :

"And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with loud songs of praise, and everlasting joy shall crown their heads; gladness and joy they shall obtain, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Isaiah xxxv. 10.

In these words did God announce the restoration of his people; and thus it will be, that, when the Messiah comes, oppression shall cease, and the tears of the oppressed shall flow no more.

May then the accepted year of the Lord be soon proclaimed, and the day of vengeance for our God be no longer delayed; and may all be comforted, in the salvation of our Holy King, who mourn for Zion. Amen.

Menachem 12th. } 5591.
July 22d. }

DISCOURSE XIX.

THE NEW YEAR.

To Thee, O our Father, we raise our feeble voice! To Thee we fly for protection! To Thee, who art enthroned in heaven, we call for salvation! Vouchsafe then, O Thou, Almighty One! to remember thy people on this thy day of judgment, and inscribe them to everlasting life, permanent bliss, and temporal security from evil, when they pass in trial before thy judgment-seat. Amen!

Brethren!

"Ended is the past year and its curses;" and we have begun a new year, and entered upon a new period in our existence. Many a one, who in the bygone year was linked to a dear friend, has seen this bond severed by the rude, unsparing hand of death.—Many, who in the former days enjoyed the repose of luxury and affluence, now moisten their hard-earned bread with the burning tear of toilsome labour.—Many who before were courted by friends, adored almost by admiring crowds, nay, envied by their distanced enemies, are now solitary and forsaken, and none so poor, none so miserable, as to render them homage. Again, many who before rioted in the enjoyment of good health, are now fast approaching the termination of their life, and the grave, as it were, is yawning at their feet, eager to enfold within its cold embrace the unwilling trembler standing on its verge. These are but a small portion of the changes, which the past twelve months have witnessed, and thus another revolution of the seasons has taught an awful lesson to the children of the dust, and has admonished them, to beware of clinging too closely to earthly things, since they must so soon be wrested from the powerless grasp of the weak and fading mortal.

"Begun has the year." Again, brethren, the grace of God is dawning upon us, who have by his mercy survived, who have again been permitted to dwell for a while longer on earth, who are yet left to be enabled to acquire a treasure in heaven by employing the existence granted to us in deeds of active benevolence and energetic piety.—I said, that the grace of God is dawning upon us; for indeed, brethren, we are surrounded by light effulgent, by the wisdom of an All-wise Creator, by munificence unbounded, and by care unflagging, and unwearied by continued exertion. And enough of grace has been granted us by God, to render sickness supportable, galling poverty not toilsome, slavery and oppression tolerable, nay death even an easy and an onward path to everlasting happiness.—Some may therefore be led to inquire, "Whence all the misery which afflicts the world? whence all the calamities, the horrors, and the violence, which desolate mankind, if God is as good, as we are told He is?" But reflection will soon answer us, that we ourselves are the cause of the manifold evil which exists; for we are heedless of the divine light which is beaming upon us; we refuse to listen to the voice that fain would instruct us in the way of life; and regardless of the bounty and munificence of God, and unwilling to trust to his providential care, we seek a way of our own, inconsistent with the happiness of ourselves, the welfare of others, and displeasing and abhorrent to our Maker. And thus we draw punishment—the evil—down upon ourselves and others, as a just recompense for our misdeeds; and crime and chastisement must follow each other, since the same cause will always produce a similar effect. And from the beginning of the presence of man on earth up to the present day, this has been the uniform course of events, and chastisement has ever followed in the footsteps of transgression; and the Almighty has thus proved to an erring world, that only in his favour there is happiness.—In the beginning peace reigned on earth, when the work of creation was finished, and in harmony all creatures lived with each other, enjoying their existence, as they proceeded perfect from the hand of their Maker. The lion rested in the forest along with the deer, and between the tiger and the calf was peace, and the lamb went unharmed by the wolf. But when Adam, the father of our race, ate of the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge, all was changed—and discord followed the path of sin, and it was not long before death lurked behind every shrub—before the winds were loaded with pestilence—before the clouds of heaven scattered destruction, and the floods of the sea carried desolation in the force of their raging billows; beast sought the life of beast, and man gloated over the slaughtered carcass of his brother. The same has also been ever since; through sin alone discord springs up; and where the word of God is disregarded miseries are accumulating, and ever and anon the terrible wrath of the Righteous Avenger is manifested in the judgment which He executes on sinners. But to punish is not the wish of the Merciful Ruler, not to destroy is his pleasure; He will instruct, He will improve, He will show his children the way of life, and by the precepts of his wisdom He endeavours to lead them all into the sanctuary of unending happiness. Now this is the light of which we have spoken, the grace, the munificence, and the care which we enjoy in our fallen state; it is, brethren, the light of the law, the grace and munificence of the divine legislation, and the care of wise commandments, which, if carefully followed, will make us all happy, all worthy children of the God of mercy,—In the law, which has thus been given, there are many commandments of a general nature, for instance, those regarding the intercourse between man and man; others, however, have an especial reference with regard to the relation of the creature to his Maker, and were instituted to impress on his mind that he has duties to observe to the Author of his being as well as to his species, and that he is accountable to Him for every act, word, and thought. In this class of duties we may reckon the laws relating to the festivals, and the observances which are to be practised on the same, since all of them, as may be seen by an inspection of the holy law itself, were to serve as mementos of certain miraculous actions of the Deity, and to keep alive within us our entire dependence on his bounty and grace.

—With regard to the festival which we are celebrating this day, we read in Numbers xxix. 1:

ובחדש השביעי באחד לחדש מקרא קדש יהיה
לכם כל מלאכת עבדה לא תעשו יום תרועה יהיה
לכם : במדבר כט' א' :

"And on the first day of the seventh month shall be unto you a holy convocation, no servile work shall ye do; a day of blowing of the cornet it shall be to you."

You will see from this precept, that we are ordered to sound the cornet, or, as we call it, the shophar, on this day, the first of the civil year, and according to our received opinions, the anniversary of the creation. It now may, perhaps, strike you as something singular, that the beginning of the year should be celebrated by the sound of the cornet, an instrument used frequently in ancient times to call the troops to war, to sound an alarm, or at other occasions of solemnity and danger; and you very likely will ask yourselves, what can be the meaning of this ceremony on this particular day?—To illustrate this commandment let us revert to the organization of our people, and to the country whence our ancestors went forth.—We are, as it is well known, descended from Abraham the Hebrew, and the country of our first organization is Asia; it was therefore so ordained by our Divine Legislator, our God and Father, to introduce such symbols and emblems into the framework of the law, as were familiar to those who first received it; and we have therefore in the imagery of our holy Writings, and in some of our ceremonies, very frequent allusions and reference both to our descent and our first habitation.—The history of Abraham, although so familiar, presents, nevertheless, many very striking points for reflection, from which particularly we, his descendants, can draw useful and wise lessons; and as the sacrifice of Isaac has an especial reference to the subject under consideration, permit me to draw your attention to it, as best fitted for to-day's reflection.—Abraham had seen the glory of his name spread among the children of the East; his riches had increased to an immense extent, and his wife Sarah had been blessed with the birth of the long-expected child; and it may be said, that in this way the whole series of promises made to the patriarch were in a train of fulfilment. For, prosperity had been promised, and he was prosperous; greatness of name was his, as God had foretold; the child which Sarah was to bear had also been given; and Abraham was thus established as the favourite of Heaven. The fair fame which he enjoyed had also confessedly not been lightly earned; for his love of the Creator had been repeatedly tested, and amidst all these trials he had not wavered, nay, his confidence had increased with every probation, and the dispensations of Heaven, and the persecution of men, had never caused him to relax in his well-founded faith. But to crown all the sacrifices to principle and love to God hitherto made, the last and severest was now demanded of him, to prove that the man destined to be the father of a multitude of nations, and of a people to be the depositary of God's holy covenant, could offer up every thing to the Lord of heaven, even the dearest hope of his heart, and to comply with a mandate which, to appearance, threatened the extinction of the most cheering promise ever made to him, that "in Isaac his seed should be called." For the command had gone forth, that he should take Isaac, the only son, the beloved, the offspring of Sarah, and sacrifice him on one of the mountains of the land of Moriah. Had Isaac now been actually sacrificed, the promise just mentioned would have been broken; and yet, did Abraham object to this seemingly capricious order? No, on the contrary, he obeyed cheerfully; and armed with his usual confidence in the unwavering truth of God, he thought, that it was unbecoming in him who had received so many bounties at the hand of his Master to inquire after his unsearchable ways, and he set forth on his perilous journey with the intended victim, resolved to fulfil the will of Heaven. The sacred spot is reached, and behold them, the father ready to sacrifice his last hope, and the son willing to become a burnt-offering on the altar of his Creator! See on yonder eminence the altar is built; the gray-headed patriarch arranges the wood; he binds the yielding one; and now behold the bright knife flashing over the head of the victim, and the sacrifice is almost fulfilled:—when lo! the outstretched hand is arrested by the messenger of Mercy, for not the sacrifice it was that God desired, but the readiness only to obey, and here indeed had been exhibited an example of ready obedience, which the ministering angels could not have surpassed; and the intended sacrifice was stayed, and the blessing of God was poured out over both, and over their descendants after them. In the history of this occurrence, we read, that a ram was sacrificed in the place of Isaac; this then will give us an explanation of the verse of Leviticus xxiii. 25: "On the first day of the seventh month shall be to you a day of rest, of blowing of the cornet in remembrance," in remembrance, namely, of the sacrifice on Moriah of a ram instead of the devoted servant of God. And it is meet that at every new period in our existence especially the recollection of this memorable event should awaken in our hearts the noblest sentiments of devotion. We should reflect that, if Abraham was ready to devote his all, the only son of his long-loved Sarah, born to him at the age of a hundred years, simply because he thought his God desired it, we also should resolve to follow his example as far as lies within our power, and to make daily those small sacrifices to principle, which are demanded of us in the service of Heaven. Abraham, as we have seen, was ready to yield the dearest possession, that which without a miracle could never have been restored; how much more ought we to hasten to submit to any inconvenience in the discharge of our duties, and to abstain from pleasures and pursuits, if they should militate in the least against our religious obligations.—Again, we have the exhilarating certainty, exemplified in the history of our people, that God blesses the child for the virtue of the parent; what father, then, and what mother, would not endeavour, if they really love their offspring, to secure them a legacy, which all the ills of the world cannot dissipate; a treasure, which can never perish? Let us, therefore, every year recal to mind the noble devotedness of the patriarchs, and resolve to follow them in their virtue and implicit confidence in God; and let us imagine that the spirits of the departed great ones whisper encouragingly in our ears, when the loud voice of the shophar resounds in all our dwellings!

Says the prophet (Amos iii. 6): "Should the cornet be blown in a city and the people not tremble?"—Brethren! the shophar is not alone to remind you of what your ancestors did and suffered; but it speaks also to you as the warning voice of God, and, as it were, reminds you that there is danger at hand, that destruction is hovering near, and it bids you to beware, whilst there is yet time to flee into the safe enclosure, before yet the enemy's power entirely overwhelms you.—Our life may be aptly compared to a road on which a stranger ventures in a foreign land. Onward he presses, eager to reach his journey's end, and heedless, because unconscious, of dangers which still may beset him on all sides. Imagine him now on the brink of a precipice in a stormy and tempestuous night, when no light is shed to guide his wavering feet. Already one foot is raised above the pit, and the next step, the next instant, would hurry him into eternity—when lo! the sound of a signal-horn reaches his ear! He is startled, he halts, and a bright flash of lightning reveals to him the giddy height from which he had nearly fallen, and he blesses the sound which warned him of the unseen danger, that has almost deprived him of life.—Again, behold this traveller toiling up the mountain-side, when bleak winter holds dominion over the frozen earth; no path is visible in the trackless snow, and he is yet far distant from the solitary hut on the cloudcapt summit, the hospitable shelter of which he is seeking. Bewildered and despairing he sinks down exhausted and fatigued, and he resigns himself to death, lamenting his hopeless lot, and turning his thoughts to his beloved and distant home. But hark! the Alpine horn animates his drooping spirits, and the consciousness that aid is near, inspires him with new strength —he toils again—and his exertions, renewed by hope, extricate him from the folds of earth's wintry winding-sheet, and at the friendly hearth of the mountain-hermit he blesses the horn that bid him hope.—Returned to his paternal roof, the cause of his country calls him to the embattled plain; but amidst the shock of contending hosts, the weary, wounded, warrior is struck down on the field of death: around him are the slain of the friend and of the foe, and he faints, unconscious, from the loss of blood; night closes around him, and the cooling winds call him again into life and consciousness; yet he dares not to move for fear of falling a prisoner in the hands of the enemy; but suddenly the bugle-horn of his fellow-warriors, summoning all the stragglers to their country's standard, teaches him that friends are approaching; he raises a faint shout, exerts the last remains of his strength, and is speedily welcomed in the secure quarters of his conquering countrymen!

This, brethren, is the voice of the shophar!—We enter upon life, imagining that we are safe, we fear not, that we shall be brought to the brink of impiety by the even path which the ways of the world open to us. But wo to our heedlessness! step by step we are brought nearer and nearer to irretrievable ruin, and we are preparing to throw ourselves into the embrace of vice: when, our course is arrested by the warning voice of God, by a slight demonstration of his disapproval, and being thus made acquainted with our folly, we commence the study of his law, and gradually we are again brought to return to the precepts we have so long forsaken; and when we are once more restored to the love of God, we bless the chastening rod which taught us to feel the error and unworthiness of our worldly conduct.

Amid the cares of life and its afflictions we become bewildered, and our spirit sinks within us, because of all the misfortunes that befal us. We are alone and solitary, there is no friend to relieve our wants, no one to speak comfort to our desponding soul, and we are almost ready to curse the day that first opened to us an existence so full of afflicting sorrows and agonizing trials. But of a sudden the word of consolation is breathed into our ears, we are extricated from our troubles; and led on by the cheering sound of comfort, so richly scattered through the pages of the heavenly law, we forget our past miseries and the trials which are now ended; and renewing our almost suspended exertions in the field of virtue, we toil on through the period of our allotment on earth, till at length we are received in the mansion of our Father, where we shall be guarded as no miser guards his gold, where we shall be watched as no mother watches her tender nursling.

Hurried away by temptations which we are not able, because not willing, to withstand, we sink almost, as though we were wearied with the struggle, into the arms of vice. We yield our energies to the destroyer; we fancy, that we have laboured enough, we imagine that we have done all which can be expected from men; and we are content to lie down amidst those already destroyed by passion, and those, who are ready to follow on the same path of ruin. Already the night of mental darkness is closing around us, already sin is rejoicing to enrol us among her votaries: when the aroused knowledge of our unworthiness awakens the lethargic sluggards, and we gather the remaining small portion of virtue around us—we struggle violently—we disregard the wounds which sin has struck—and we drag ourselves, slowly—slowly—but ever onward, till we are again received amidst the friends of God, and reassured by the example of our brethren, we are rendered equally sincere, though but late, members of the noble fraternity, whose aim is the service of the Lord and the well-being of their fellow-men.—If then, brethren, you hear the sound of the cornet, let it appear to you as the warning voice which speaks to you symbolically from Heaven, to rouse you from moral lethargy, to reanimate you when you are sinking under affliction, and to warn you when you are carelessly exposing yourselves to the temptations of sinful life!

Says the Psalmist: "God ascendeth midst the shouting, the Lord amidst the voice of the cornet. Sing ye to God, sing ye, sing to our King, sing ye. For God is King over all the earth, commence the song of instruction." (Psalm xlvii.) To-day is the anniversary of creation; this is the day, on which we annually celebrate the generation of the universe. It is the day on which Adam first came into being, and when, rejoiced at his existence, he first acknowledged his Maker. Sound then the cornet! for God is king. Blow the trumpet! for the Eternal ruleth. Commence the shout of thanksgiving! for the Merciful One reigneth! Yes, let us at the return of every year, again and again acknowledge the supreme rule of our Father, in the manner He has commanded, and let the first day in every new period be celebrated as a festival in honour of the Lord's enthronement! —When then the shophar is blown in all our dwellings, let us recollect the sacrifice which Abraham was willing to make in obedience to the voice of his Creator! Let this recollection attune our hearts to God's service; and let this feeling, teaching us to tear our thoughts away from the sinful allurements of earthly life, prepare each one of us to acknowledge and to serve sincerely the Father of his people, as the sole King of the world, the Ruler of our destinies, and the only Haven of our hope!

"Begun has the year and its blessings!" May the Supreme Disposer of all events grant us a happy year, and insure us freedom of body, disenthralment of mind, personal security, and national welfare. May the bondmen be freed, and may to the captives of Zion the trumpet of salvation sound, and the great shophar recal those who are lost in the land of Assyria, and are dispersed in the land of Egypt; and may we all, that hope for salvation, be speedily assembled to worship on the holy mountain at Jerusalem, in the temple which shall be raised above all the hills, as the dwelling of the King of glory! Amen, Selah.

Elul 28th. } 5591.
Sept. 6th. }

DISCOURSE XX.

THE PASSOVER.

O our Father, we call upon thee! O be gracious to thy people, and be merciful to the children of thy servants, and lead them by gentle means to the haven of thy blessing, and let them see, that in kindness it was Thou didst punish them; that in paternal love Thou didst let them feel the burning of thy anger, in order that they might thereby be made more worthy of the inheritance Thou didst promise them in this world and in the world to come! Amen.

Brethren!

It is to-day the feast of unleavened bread, it is the Passover of the Lord!—But why the festivities of the day? why the eating of the unleavened bread? why the holy convocation?—To this we may answer in the language of the law: "Because the Lord led us out of the land of Egypt from the house of bondage!" Yes, brethren, it was in those days, when a barbarous Pharaoh ruled over all the land of Egypt, that the Israelites, our ancestors, were held in cruel bondage, compelled to work as slaves in the fields, in public buildings, and all kinds of heavy labour, and scourged by the lash of merciless task-masters. It had been so pre-ordained by the will of Him, who spoke, and the world came into being, that the descendants of Abraham should be strangers four hundred years in a land not theirs, and be compelled there to submit to labour and injury; but that on the other hand the promised blessings and their entire freedom were not to be withheld as soon as the appointed time had arrived.—But in the mean while the suffering of Israel was grievous in the extreme; for the tyrant, abusing the power granted him by the prophecy of God, even slaughtered the new-born children, in order to diminish the numbers of the detested people, or perhaps altogether to exterminate them from the face of the earth. And he thought, that his will could be accomplished, that the Protector of Israel would look with apathy upon the bodies of innocent babes floating down the stream of the Nile, would not watch them as they were swallowed up by the remorseless waves! Vain thought! he had not yet been taught the futility of man's warring with the Almighty. His arms had been prosperous; wherever he turned his eye for conquest, success had followed his path; and should he listen to the prayer of the abject slave—listen to the entreaty of a powerless and detested subject? No, not Mitzraim's king would lower his royal dignity thus; and he thought himself secure in his palace of splendour, by the side of his river-god, in the midst of his numerous guards, and amongst the masses of his false priests and soothsayers.—But lo! the time of the end had arrived; and even in this very palace, even surrounded by these priests and wise soothsayers, was educated the man, was nurtured the prophet, who was destined to free the oppressed under the guidance of Heaven, and who, armed with the instruments of vengeance of the God of righteousness, was to humble the oppressor, and to make him feel, that the Great King of Israel "rules in the midst of the earth." As said already, Pharaoh had ordered his people to throw every new-born male child of the Hebrews into the river; but although his satellites carefully obeyed the ruthless decree, the wife of Amram nevertheless succeeded in hiding her infant for a space of three months from the searching eye of the king's executioners. Three months she had thus spent in unceasing care and watching, when she discovered to her sorrow, that her home was no longer a place of safety for her innocent and tender offspring. Picture to yourselves the mother's grief, when she was made conscious of the great, the apparently inevitable danger. Whither should she fly? to whom should she look for protection? Her own people, nay, the chosen husband of her love, were unable to assist her, for all were alike suffering in bondage. And should she go to the king to crave his indulgence and pity? but he spurned the helpless petitioners, and refused to listen to their entreaty; nay, he increased the burden of their labours, when they prayed for an alleviation of their task.—But the virtuous are never forsaken, and the righteous are never left without a protector; and the mother of Moses fully verified this consoling truth by her example.—Rather than beg in vain of hearts which felt not for the distresses of others, she resolved to consign the precious charge to the hands of the Being who had confided him to her. She accordingly made a box of bullrushes, and having made it water-tight, she put her child therein, and placed it among the rushes on the shore of the Nile, convinced, that He, who feedeth "the children of the raven when they cry," could, if it pleased his wisdom, protect and rescue the helpless infant from his perilous situation. And soon it was proved that she had hoped well; for the king's daughter, coming to bathe, espied the box among the reeds, and opening it she discovered the child; and penetrated with pity for the forlorn babe, proscribed from his very birth, she resolved to rescue him from death.—In short, she adopted the child, and called him Mosheh, in commemoration of her having drawn* him from the water; and in the palace of the oppressor of his people the future messenger of Heaven passed the years of his infancy and early manhood.—Thus much for the early years of the chosen lawgiver; and does it not strike you, that his miraculous escape from a watery grave, must have early impressed a mind like his with the conviction, that there is a great and watchful Being ever regardful of whatever is done on earth? that his own case must have taught him, that the little no less than the great, the humble and lowly no less than the proud and lofty are continually under the direction of an All-wise Supreme? And in truth, we should think, that he was so impressed; for we see in his early history that he opposed himself to the cause of oppression, although he had every thing to hope from it, and nothing could be gained by favouring the suffering Israelites.—At length the time arrived, when the fugitive Moses was to effect single-handed, but armed with superior power, the deliverance of his fellow-sufferers. He was feeding the flock of his wife's father in the wilderness, when the word of God was imparted to him: "Go, and I will send thee to Pharaoh, and thou shalt bring out my people of Israel out of Egypt." It was at the end of the period, which had been set as the limit of the sufferings of our ancestors, that Moses was commissioned to lead them forth to the service of the Lord. He was, therefore, told to go to the king and tell him, that the Eternal Lord of heaven and earth had appeared to him, and had ordered him to demand the dismissal of his first-born son, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.—Moses went, and spoke the words of the Lord before a despot, who had made unto himself a god, who worshipped the water which he drank, the ox who ploughed his field, and the crocodile whose jaws destroyed many of his people. To him Moses spoke as God had told him; but Pharaoh, too confiding in his power, too much corrupted by the flattery of his courtiers, and too much emboldened by the submissiveness of his abject subjects, said contemptuously: "Who is the Eternal, whose voice I shall obey to let Israel go? I know not the Eternal, and Israel too I will not dismiss."—But soon even he was convinced, that it is useless to endeavour to escape from the power of the Supreme. Signs and wonders were performed in his presence; a staff thrown from the hands of Aaron became a serpent; the water of the holy river of the Egyptians was changed into blood; the clear stream produced frogs innumerable; anon the dust was changed into noxious insects; then wild beasts in immense masses devoured every thing before them; a pestilence smote all the cattle exposed in the fields; the bodies of all, of the priests even, were covered with blains and ulcers; hail cut down every thing exposed abroad; again locusts devoured the green grass and the young grain, even the leaves of the trees, and whatever else the hail had spared; and, lastly, an impenetrable gloom, a total darkness, had shrouded the fair land of the sun for three days; and yet Pharaoh relented not. Once, indeed, he acknowledged: "The Lord is righteous, and I and my people are sinners;" but no sooner had the plague vanished, than Pharaoh was like himself again; he forgot the chastisement, hardened his heart, the flattery of his courtiers again induced him to look upon himself as the favoured son of his gods, and in consequence, he repeated his obduracy and sinned again. Here, let me observe to you, brethen, that Pharaoh is not the only obdurate sinner, who disregards the awful admonitions of Heaven. Even we, ourselves, are very often no better than the tyrant, whose deeds we all denounce as cruel and oppressive, and whom we all adjudge to have been rightly punished. Look, I pray you, at some passages of your life, none of us is perfect, for we all have sinned, we all have transgressed against the laws of God, and reflect, how it occasionally happened, that some unexpected check was given to your course; how you at first were somewhat startled at the singularity of God's judgment against you; but how you afterwards suffered the impression to wear off, which the solemn and well-intended warning had at first produced. It is even so; our pride from time to time whispers into our ear: "Be not afraid, thy conduct was justifiable, it was the same which any other man in thy situation would have pursued;" and in surety, we are led astray, or rather we *suffer* ourselves very willingly to be blindfolded, and consequently having explained every circumstance of the strange occurrence to our satisfaction, we sin anew, and heap wilful transgression upon our former trespasses.—The same was the case with the king of Egypt. He had all along conceived that his conduct towards the Israelites was just and right; for, thought he: "Shall my slaves, those I have received as such from my predecessor, go free, without ransom? they now build my towns, they now labour for me in the field, they now dig my canals; and whence shall I obtain compensation for their loss? No, Israel shall not go free!" And as each plague had passed away, and as soon as the punishment was removed, he attributed it to accident, to some chance, which he to be sure could not account for, but which he yet did not believe to be a manifestation of the power of the Deity, a Deity too, whom neither he nor his ancestors acknowledged.—His servants also lent their aid to inspire him with resistance. They had been accustomed to follow him implicitly; to hear with them was to obey; they, therefore, did not, durst not, advise him to yield, and they even applauded his acts, as we are told in Scriptures, "and Pharaoh hardened his heart, he himself as well as his servants;" and then, it must be considered, that the Egyptians themselves were individually benefitted by the labours of the Israelites, as well as the state.—Thus, then, Pharaoh resisted the ten times repeated warning and miraculous manifestation; but now the time had arrived, when longer disobedience was rendered impossible, when by the most signal calamity that ever befel any land the king of Mitzraim was to be taught, that it behoves mortals to bow before the throne of the King of kings, the Holy One, praised be He.—Moses, in the last interview he had with Pharaoh in his palace, spoke: "Thus hath said the Lord, About midnight, I will walk abroad in the midst of Egypt, when every first-born in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first-born of Pharaoh, who is to sit on his throne, to the first-born of the slave, who sitteth behind the mill, and every first-born of cattle." These are the words of the terrible denunciation. Pharaoh might have averted the blow, which was to reach him no less than the meanest of his people, by a timely compliance with the righteous demand; but he would not listen, and so the vengeance of the Lord took its course. It was at the dead hour of midnight; it was in the night of the fifteenth of the first month; it was whilst the Israelites were celebrating their first festival of redemption; it was whilst the Egyptians rested as they thought, securely in their beds, that the destroyer walked forth in the land. It was as though a blighting dew had fallen in every house, so instantaneous was the destruction; in every palace, in every house, in every hovel, in every prison there was death, the young dropped down in the midst perhaps of the nightly revel, and the aged lay, as it were, strangled on their couches.—And the king—he beheld his eldest son expiring at his feet, the son who, as he had hoped, would have succeeded to his kingdom, even he was cut off; nay, the cattle, which the Egyptians worshipped, perished, and the images, which they had set up for contemplation, for auguries or worship, were hurled from their stands, and they crumbled into dust before the mighty Hand that was outstretched in that night.—

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* The word משה (*mahsho*) signifies to draw from the water, whence the name of Moses (*Mosheh*), or the one rescued from the water.

In every house there was now wailing and lamentation, every one thought his time of death would come next; the whole land was filled with mourning, the like of which had never before been known in Egypt, and the impulse to get rid at all hazards of the dangerous slaves, on whose account the land had well-nigh been ruined, became irresistible; and the obdurate king himself hastened to seek out Moses, to bid him leave Egypt instantly, together with the people of Israel.—Thus was the liberty of our people obtained; and in addition the Egyptians loaded them with presents, every thing seemed to be left to the choice of the Israelites, who then went out, even before their doughs, which they had prepared, could become leavened, and they baked them into unleavened cakes on the road.—This is a brief view of the long captivity, degrading servitude of our ancestors, and of obstinate resistance and ultimate forced concessions on the part of the king and the people of Egypt. And in commemoration of these events, and to perpetuate the memory of the hurry in which we went out, so that the bread had to be baked without its being suffered to become leavened, we were commanded (Deut. xvi. 1–3):

שמור את חדש האביב ועשית פסח להי אלהיך
כי בחדש האביב הוציאך ה׳ אלהיך ממצרים לילה:
שבעת ימים תאכל עליו מצות לחם עני כי בחפזון
יצאת מארץ מצרים למען תזכר את יום צאתך מארץ
מצרים כל ימי חייך: דבר׳ טז׳ א׳־ג׳:

"Observe the month of Abib, that thou makest then the Passover in honour of the Lord thy God; for in the month of Abib, did the Lord thy God bring thee out of the land of Egypt at night." And again: "Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, the bread of poverty; for in haste thou didst go out of Egypt, for the sake that thou mayest remember the day of thy going out of the land of Egypt, all the days of thy life."

This, brethren, then, is the reason of our being here this day, and this is the cause of our abstaining from every thing which is leavened during the Passover. If the stranger now, and our children, who are as yet unacquainted with the wonderful deeds of the Lord, which He wrought for us in olden times, ask: "Why is this service?" we should answer, that it is to remind us of the abundant mercies of which we all participated; for if it had not pleased the Almighty (to adopt the language of our service) to redeem our ancestors from Egypt, then we and our children, and our children's children would even to this day have been slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt. And an event like this is surely deserving of the most solemn commemoration. Look upon the state of the world at the time of the Exodus. Idolatry rested like an incubus upon all mankind; the faculties of reasoning beings were blunted by gross superstition; and had God not raised up to himself a people, and gifted them with better statutes and more sublime conceptions of himself, what, I ask, would have been for all ages the condition of the children of Adam? It is futile to assert, that the progressive development of reason would have effected a reformation, when we plainly see, that the enlightenment of man had gradually deteriorated, until he had become, as said already, the benighted idolater. Suppose now, this state had continued to this period of time, to this age, which we are so apt to call enlightened: is it to be believed, that human reason could have progressed, unless an event similar to the miraculous deliverance of the Israelites had taken place? And in truth, this event was in itself sufficient to regenerate the world. First, it was the dawning of freedom for every member of the human family, since it is the first on record of the unjust power of tyranny broken; and, secondly, it was the commencement of a new era in the disenthralment of the mind, since it was then that the light was first kindled, which has burned ever since with untarnished lustre, and which must ultimately beam with redoubled splendour upon every soul; which must at last bring every existing reasoning being within the fold of our God's pasturage, and make all nations only as so many members of the same family, united by one common tie of unity of interest and uniformity of worship.—This is the event we celebrate, a twofold deliverance, of mind and body, not alone for ourselves, but also for all who like us derive their parentage from the founder of the human race.—Let us then reflect seriously upon the cause of this festival, and let us in truth, according to the dictates of the law, remember the day of our going out of Egypt all the days of our life; since it was not merely the humbling of Pharaoh, but also the regeneration of the whole world which was effected thereby.—In return for this great favour we can render the Almighty nothing but a virtuous conduct; for to Him all the acts of man can be of no importance, (since they cannot affect his beatitude,) except when they, in accordance with his will, promote their own happiness. He wills our happiness only; our deeds can neither hurt nor benefit Him, as He is entirely removed from the influence of every created being, He being the Author of all that exists.—Let, therefore, the recurrence of the Passover animate us to a renewal of our attachment to our God's holy precepts; let us all join our hearts, our hands, our simultaneous efforts, to prove to all, that we Israelites are not ungrateful for all the goodness we have received, and are even yet receiving, although no longer united under one paternal government. Let us forget all trifling differences, let every man forgive the sins committed against him by his neighbour; but let the proud oppressor of the poor, and the hard-hearted avaricious man, who both look upon the distresses of their fellow-beings with indifference, let them, I say, reflect, that retribution will come, when they will find, that neither power nor wealth will shield them against God's almighty power; for He who punished Pharaoh and the guilty Egyptians, can even now smite the sinner, no matter how deeply he may lie concealed, no matter how much he may have fortified himself by silencing his conscience, no matter how long the trespass is past, and he vainly dreams his acts lie buried in oblivion.—In fine, the admonition so often repeated in the Pentateuch: "Remember, that thou hast been a slave in Egpyt," should remind us of the debt of gratitude we owe to God, and this reminding us should induce us also to love Him who has been so gracious; so that we may be rendered good and pious, and worthy of bliss in this life, and of happiness hereafter.

May the grace of the Lord always surround us. Amen!

Nissan 13th. } 5592.
April 13th. }

DISCOURSE XXI.

THE PENTECOST.

To the God of Israel, who so often has displayed his glory and goodness toward his children, be praise and glory for everlasting. Amen.

Brethren!

In my late address on the occasion of the Passover I adverted briefly to the wonders which the Almighty displayed in Egypt, and to the miracles and fearful deeds by which He brought about the enlargement of our ancestors from cruel bondage. This was indeed an act of grace, for which our everlasting thanks should ever be cheerfully rendered to Him who proved himself so good to the afflicted; who listened to us when nothing attainable through human energy was able to assist us, and who broke the bonds which centuries of oppression, aided by the ingenious devices which cunning and cruelty had invented, had well-nigh rendered irresistible.—But with all these wonderful acts the deliverance was yet left incomplete. The Israelites, as they came from Egypt, were tainted with all the vices and superstitions of their late task-masters, so at least we should judge from the tenor of the Bible-history; and they were therefore unfit to be called the people of God, since nothing distinguished them from the nations of the earth, save their descent from the patriarchs, the original worshippers of the

Lord of heaven. As thus they needed a reformation to make them fit subjects for God's empire, it pleased Him, their Father and the Father of all the world, to come and instruct them himself, for the purpose that they might know what was pleasing to Him, and that by acting according to their newly acquired knowledge, they might live as becomes the children of God.—The Lord himself came to instruct the Israelites! How sublime the meekness of the Creator must appear to us! The children of his adorers, "his friends," as his record styles them, are in trouble, and He saves them! They are sunk in ignorance, undeserving of grace, and He instructs and improves them, and becomes, in this manner, their Creator in a twofold sense of the word! He himself, although raised beyond the reach of our most elevated conceptions, greater far than the most daring flight of fancy can paint Him,—He, I say, condescended to instruct in love the children of the dust, whose life is like the fleeting shadow; whose deeds are to Him as though they had not been; and whose existence is derived from Him! Ay, even as a father teaches his son, as openly as the mother speaks to her daughter, spoke the Everlasting One; and thus showed us how in Him, the Most Perfect, meekness is allied with sublimity; how in our God condescension is inseparably interwoven with unlimited greatness! Yet if we come to consider how truly great He is; how every thing existing is existing in Him; how He is contained in nothing, but all is contained in Him: we shall cease to wonder, and not deem the descent on Sinai, which we celebrate this day, as an act unworthy of the dignity of the Deity. He is the source of all wisdom, and the intelligence of the greatest sage is intelligence derived from Him: why should we then be astonished, that, to effect a great good, He should think it consonant with his dignity to descend in all his glory, and teach the children of those, who had been appointed by Him as the parents of a great nation and the blessing of all mankind, the laws which his wisdom had instituted as the everlasting, unwavering, and immaculate landmarks of the path of righteousness?—If, then, our opponents sneeringly ask us, if we can be serious in believing in a direct revelation of an especial code of laws, we will answer them: The God who created man, endowed him with a body, so far superior to that of any other animal; who caused him to walk erect, that he with uplifted eyes might contemplate the expansion of yon firmament, glittering by day with the brilliant light of the sun, and by night illumined by the silvery moon, and the myriads of sparkling stars, the suns of other systems; and who, to sum up all, has bestowed on him an intelligent mind, a living soul, and a thinking spirit, the like of which nothing earthly does possess: can He not, if so He wills, speak audibly to the ear, and through it to the mind, those things which He may believe to be of general and permanent benefit? His ability then cannot be denied, and that He has actually done so is clearly proved, by the fact, that the ten commandments, promulgated to an astonished world for the first time on this day, in the year of the world, according to our computation, 2448, are yet in existence, are yet known, read and acknowledged; and no code, which ever was devised, without acknowledging them as the basis of right, has been upheld either in theory or in practice.—Look to the laws of Babylon, their memory is forgotten; inquire for the statutes of Greece and Rome, and they are no more obeyed; for all were the work of men bent only upon their own aggrandizement; whereas our laws, founded upon the wisdom of God, are as new this day, as dear to the heart of the lover of his species, as much the established code of our nation, as on that day when our adoring ancestors stood at the foot of Sinai!—Another evidence of the divine origin of the Decalogue can be found therein, that it has never been improved upon since it was first given; for what but divine Wisdom could be so perfect, what but not being derived from human experience, can render any thing free from the taint of human work—imperfection?—But let me stop here; to pronounce a eulogium upon the wisdom of God would ill become a fallible, ignorant mortal; for none but God himself can know the extent of good which has been and ever must be derived from the laws which He himself made known!—Therefore, let our silence be praise; let our inability to express our admiration be the evidence of the depth of our feelings, since we can never say enough, even though the most eloquent were for ever to expatiate upon the theme, and exhaust the richest stores of language. Yet the heart must clothe itself in words, or else all communication of ideas between man and man would become impossible; so then, whatever we express of feeling and of gratitude should always be taken as the tribute of the heart of the thinking to animate through example and precept those who surround him to an equal or superior share of piety and veneration to God; and to induce them, by an exposition of the excellencies of the holy Torah, to follow the precepts therein contained.—Having premised these views, let us proceed to the consideration of the following verse from the portion we read to-day:

ועתה אם שמוע תשמעו בקלי ושמרתם את בריתי
והייתם לי סגלה מכל העמים כי לי כל הארץ :
ואתם תהיו לי ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש אלה
הדברים אשר תדבר אל בני ישראל : שמות יט׳ ה׳־ו׳ :

"And now, if you will hearken to my voice and observe my covenant, you shall be to me the most beloved of all nations; for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak to the children of Israel." (Exodus xix. 5–6.)

The Almighty had visited our parents in Egypt, and had seen them oppressed by slavery, and sunk in ignorance and idolatry. They were the descendants of Abraham, to whom God had promised, that as soon as the servitude to which his children had been destined should have continued till the end of the limited period, they should be redeemed. In consequence of this promise, the oppressors of the Israelites were by degrees brought to relent of their cruelty, and at length to dismiss them, loaded with riches; and thus, as it were, the Almighty had bought them for his servants, since through his powerful intervention alone their deliverance from thraldom had been effected. It was then that they went forth into the wilderness of Arabia, led through trackless desolation by the protection of God, under guidance of his chosen servant. The Egyptians soon repented of their having dismissed the Israelites, and pursued them to the shores of the Red Sea; and here again the arm of God interposed; He caused the children of Jacob to pass through the divided waters, and sunk the pursuing host of Pharaoh amidst the returning billows. At length the redeemed arrived at the foot of Sinai, in the third month of their redemption, and halted there by the command of God. This was the spot of their present destination, for it was here the Israelites were to worship the Eternal Father, upon their going out of Egypt, as Moses had been promised. All, indeed, conspired to render the present moment and the present spot the best adapted to impress feelings of awe and veneration upon their minds. For as to the time, it followed immediately upon the many miraculous benefits heaped upon them, which to deserve they could have done nothing; and to do aught in return for them must have appeared to them even, uninstructed as they were, utterly inconceivable, as they must have early enough discovered, that the Being, who had wrought so many things in their favour, was One, to repay whom with *benefits* was impossible. And as to the spot, it was then, and is now as travellers tell, a beautiful mountain, with various peaks, one rising above the other, its sides covered with verdure in the midst of a frightful and barren desert; and in a country where there is no water to refresh the thirsty traveller stands Mount Horeb, blessed with a cooling spring. It appears as though it were a temple consecrated to the God of benevolence, reared with his own hands, blessed by his spirit, and enriched by his bounty, to receive the wearied and despairing wanderer, who has almost yielded all hope of being saved from the perils of his pathless journey. So then the time of the promulgation of the law was the period when the Israelites had been practically taught, that the All-ruling One is capable to convert the greatest calamity into blessings; who could raise the humblest to a proud eminence; who could punish the obdurate sinner with punishment beyond the regular course of nature; and who watches over all, the great and the humble, the rich and the poor, with the same paternal solicitude. This moment, we should judge, must have found the whole congregation in a temper of mind to inspire them with gratitude to their heavenly Benefactor, and their own feelings must have induced them to prove their gratitude by their conduct. Behold them, then, encamped at the foot of the beautiful Mount Sinai, at that green island amidst an ocean of sand; behold Moses, who had hitherto been with the people, called by a voice of an unseen speaker to come up the mount, and imagine the feelings of all his followers at seeing him obey the mysterious call. Anon he appears to listen in breathless attention to an unseen mouth and an unheard voice, and at length he descends again to the camp. The Israelites had been told, that on this spot they should serve God the Lord; his service had hitherto been entirely unknown to them, and they knew not, if the frightful worship of the heathen idols, where human sacrifices bleed on the altar, where the yet trembling heart of the immolated victim is drawn from the living bosom, where the innocent nursling is laid upon the heated arms of Moloch's image,—they knew not, I say, if the service of the Lord might not require from them the same horrors, unused as they were to any other worship.—But no, Moses came not with a message of abominations, he spoke not the words of a wrathful but of a beneficent Being; and thus he spoke in the name of Him who had sent him:

"You have seen what I have done to Egypt, and how I have borne you upon eagles' wings, and brought you to me; and now, if you will hearken to my voice, and observe my covenant, you shall be to me the most beloved of all nations; for all the earth is mine; and you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

In this first announcement was distinctly contained the whole subject of the intercourse, if I may use the terms, between God and the Israelites. He first states how He had been their benefactor, and how great the redemption had been, which He had vouchsafed to bestow on them. Next, how He had protected them, as the eagle covers with her body her young brood, from the sword of the Egyptian pursuers and the Amalekite army; how He had provided them with bread in a land where there is no sowing, and how He had caused the water to flow from the hard rock to quench their thirst. And for what had all this great goodness been bestowed? to aggrandize God's power? No; his power is unlimited, and can therefore not be made greater. What then was the object of all this? Solely to introduce amongst mankind a purer worship than the various modes and species of idolatry then prevalent, and to re-establish on a firmer, and never to-be-shaken, footing, the covenant which He had made with Abraham!—"I have borne you upon eagles' wings, and brought you to me," says

God; "I have done all this for your own benefit, from no motives of enlarging my kingdom, for all the earth is mine; wherever I turn my view, every thing stands ready to my will; the angels of purity, to whom no carnal desire is known, are my servants; the sun in his course must obey my mandate; the moon in her orbit is ready to stop in her career at my bidding; do I speak, the waters of the vasty ocean are divided and show their deepest chasm; and do I but will, the devouring pestilence strides abroad, and slays the children of men; and at my nod all nature will return to a chaotic state, and life and death, spirit and matter, and fire and water, become mixed up in one wide mass of confusion and desolation. But all I desire is to bring you to me, meaning: It is my will to rear you as a people devoted to my service. You I have selected. Long you sighed in hopeless servitude; where were the gods of Egypt, whom you used to regard with veneration? And when I at length stood forth to relieve you, where was again the power of Egypt's idols to stay *my power?* Thus have I endeavoured to impress on your minds my greatness and my glory, and thus prepared, you are of all nations the one best calculated to receive my law, and to become as it were members in a covenant with me." In this manner were the Israelites to repay the many blessings showered upon them, they were in this address of God called on to adopt his kingdom, they should henceforward obey Him as their chief ruler; He would be their Legislator, their King, and Protector, and they should only obey the laws which He would prescribe.—Thus also says the message: "You shall be a kingdom of priests;"

meaning, every person of the congregation by obedience to God's will would render himself as a priest, administering before the sanctuary of the Lord. In the outward worship, in the service of the temple and Synagogue, not every one can be a minister; for not every one can by previous education be qualified, nor if the whole body of mankind were so qualified could they all simultaneously act as ministers. But in the worship of the heart, in adoration of the Supreme, in obedience to the law, in charity and benevolence, in purity of soul, and in a devout spirit, all can join, simultaneously and perpetually. Virtue and fear of God are not qualities inherent to station, age, or sex; but the whole mass of men are here capable of joining, since virtue is so extensive in its operations, that there is field enough for every one to act in righteousness. Nay more, the more virtuous deeds are committed, the farther will the sphere of their operation be extended, since the mass of iniquity is thereby diminished, and that of useful piety extended. Thus can every one be as a priest, and the whole Israelitish nation be a kingdom of priests, when all endeavour to lead a holy life, that is to say, when all by a simultaneous effort to act correctly contribute whatever is in their power,—be it little, be it much,—to act virtuously themselves, and induce others to do likewise. —For this being holy they were promised the immediate favour of God, in fact, a continuation of the mercies which they had received already.—The terms of the covenant were soon made known to them; for on the third day the Lord descended in his awful glory, and proclaimed to the Israelites his will. And what willed He? were his laws those of inhumanity and ferocity? was his yoke too severe a burden? No; He commanded only the observance of a pure worship, where *reason* and not *ignorance* was to lead the people. In place of a multitude of adored beings or ideas, He placed before our parents *the idea of One* Maker, Ruler, and Preserver of all things.—In place of unmitigated service, He commanded that one day in the week every man, even the *slave*, should cease from labour, and thus celebrate the creation of all by the One Creator!—In place of barbarities, of murders, theft, and false-swearing, and duplicity, He commanded that whatever a man was possessed of should be inviolably his, and was not to be taken from him, except by a just, impartial, and as far as possible *merciful* judicial verdict. In fine, the foundation of the covenant is reason the most refined,—its object humanity and peace. It was for this end that the Israelites had been redeemed from bondage, that they, moved by gratitude and separated from intercourse with the rest of sunken and degraded mankind, might be induced cheerfully to adopt a wise and beneficent code of laws devised by the Supreme Wisdom!—How those laws have acted, how many and innumerable benefits we have derived from them, how many nations have already been blessed with the light and wisdom and civilization derived even from their *shadow:* I will not now advert to, as this subject would lead me too far, even if I could hope to place it in a light becoming its importance before you. However, every one of you can institute an estimate for himself by merely taking a survey of the history of our people and that of any of the heathen nations. Weak in numbers, and wellnigh exterminated by frequent wars and persecutions from enemies, we are yet left a proud monument of God's greatness and wisdom. Powerful in numbers, and conquering in war, our oppressors have passed away, and perhaps some blackened ruins are nearly all that is left to tell: "Here is the grave of a powerful, a wise, and a great nation!"—Let then the recurrence of this holy festival animate us to observe the terms of the covenant under which alone we can prosper! I speak advisedly, under the terms of the covenant alone we can prosper! Without this Israel is weak, is powerless,—with it it is every thing, powerful and conquering in captivity and under sufferings! Nation has vied with nation to deprive us of this invaluable treasure; ay, they have tortured, slaughtered, and exposed millions to destruction, to compel us to lie down with them, to become as low as they were, degraded amongst men, and strangers to the pure religion of God. But thanks be to the All-ruling One, we are yet left, though few in number, to celebrate for more than the three thousandth time the anniversary of the great and glorious annunciation of the Decalogue. Who then can be so base, so unworthy of the name of man, as not to feel a glow of pride at the name of Israel, Israel the beloved people, which became the depositary of the heavenly purity of the law? Who is mean enough to barter away whatever is noble and elevated for earthly profit, or a vain, empty, boastful renown? I hope there are but few who can sink so low from the elevated sphere pointed out to them by their Father above, few who care not to preserve their inestimable birthright!—Oh, brethren! let not the admonition of one, though so humble and unworthy as he who addresses you now, be lost upon you, and let every succeeding year find our number of faithful adherents undiminished, and let all the world see in our conduct, that we at least humbly strive to deserve in some little degree to be called "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation!"

Glory be to God in heaven! and may his blessed light continually enlighten our souls, and may we thus all be led to happiness in a world where there is no darkness, no contention; but where all is reason and peace, and all is glory in the temple, where God alone is known, where the Eternal alone is worshipped. Amen.

Sivan 5th. } 5592.
June 3d. }

DISCOURSE XXII.

THE VISITATION OF HEAVEN.

O Lord, Creator of the universe! although unworthy through our manifold transgressions, we approach the seat of thy mercy, to crave thy favour and to seek thy protection. For already has the rod of thy anger been stretched out over the nations of the earth, and the dreaded punishment has already, even now, reached this land, and filled the cities with mourning and wailing for those slain by the workings of thy wrath!—We now bend with terror of heart before the awful effects of thy just anger, and supplicate thy forgiveness, O most merciful Father, for the many transgressions and the often-repeated disobedience, which caused Thee to unloose against guilty mankind the pestilence, and to command destruction to go forth over the face of the earth!

The East and the West have alike felt the effects of thy indignation, and we have truly been taught, that from thy face there is no fleeing, and that there is no shield for the children of men from thy anger but in thy mercy. And in vain has been human activity; the physician's skill has been set at naught; for Thou hast bidden death, and who can prevail against Thee? Nations too have leagued to keep out the destroyer from their boundaries; but Thou makest the wings of the wind thy messenger, and the myriads of slain, covering the fair fields of their lands, proclaim the triumph of thy power. Armies also, in the full hope of conquest, have quailed before Thee; and they who were not conquered by men, sunk before the power of thy outstretched arm!

Behold us now, O our Father, supplicating thy protection! Thou who art near when all other aid faileth! O spare thy people from the devouring pestilence, and guard them from the evil that is impending.—We gratefully acknowledge thy favour extended to Israel, in having so mercifully shielded them in the midst of the nations visited by this calamity; be farther gracious to us, and look with compassion upon the remnant of thy flock that has escaped!

Merciful and gracious Lord! humbly do we acknowledge our own unworthiness, because of our sins; but Thou hast said, that Thou wouldst ever be nigh unto those who call upon Thee in truth, and that Thou wouldst never despise the contrite and repentant heart. May it then be thy will to take under the protection of thy wing, not alone the children of the covenant, but also the inhabitants of this city and this land in which we reside, and the nations of all earth who may fly to Thee for aid, although they obey not thy laws which Thou hast given to our ancestors! and shield us and them from destruction, that they also may learn to reverence thy name, and to repent of the wrong they have done, and be saved according to thy abundant kindness. And oh, say to the angel of destruction: "Hold! stay thy hand;" so that we all may yet live and amend the evil of our ways, before we are called hence to appear before Thee in judgment!

But not upon our virtue do we rely in asking thy favour, but solely upon thy kindness, for we have often been taught, that before Thee no flesh can be justified! In Thee alone we put our trust, O Father of mercy! who art everlasting, almighty, most merciful and gracious, withholding long thy anger, and full of kindness and truth; who preservest thy kindness unto the thousandth generation, and who pardonest wickedness, transgression, and sin; but who also visitest iniquity with just and paternal retribution!—O let now thy goodness be extended to thy children, for the sake of the covenant Thou hast made with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob, to whom Thou hast sworn, that Thou wouldst be God to them and to their children after them, and though they should sin, Thou wouldst remember, even in chastisement, thy mercy which is everlasting.—O guard then our steps, that we may not stumble, and protect us from the pestilence "that walketh in darkness, and the destruction that stalketh forth in midday!"—And may this be thy will, and may the prayer of our lips, and the thoughts of our hearts, be acceptable to Thee, our Rock and Redeemer. Amen.

BRETHREN!

Not to celebrate the annual recurrence of some joyful period of deliverance are we assembled this day; but to call, as it were, more unanimously than each individual can do by himself, upon the God of our destinies for an exemption of the dreadful scourge, which has been for fifteen years spreading desolation in its way, and has at length burst with fearful violence over our city, together with many other towns in this hitherto favoured hemisphere. We have for a time been indulged to behold from afar the punishment which was sent down upon distant lands; already we imagined, that here, at so great a distance, we should be safe. But, alas! the storm, which has been gathering for so long a period, has burst upon us in all its awful gloom, with all the suddenness of the lightning; and they who deem themselves secure in the joy of health and life, are thrown upon the bed of wo, and before human aid can commence its battle with death, the spirit has flown, and is snatched from this earth, and its cares, and its enjoyments.

During the progress of this pestilence a rare, perhaps an unexampled, spectacle has presented itself to our view. Nations, those near and those far from the native soil of the dreaded disease, have endeavoured, by non-intercourse and other precautionary measures, to prevent its introduction into their lands, so that it appeared that, if human power could do aught in averting the chastisement, it would have been accomplished. But no, how vigilant soever the watchmen were, they had not the aid of God with them, and "vain is the watchman's vigilance, if the Lord guardeth not the city;" and individuals who fled from infected places, thinking to escape by distance the death they dreaded at home, met it in the solitude of the mountain, the seclusion of the forest, and upon the stormy billows of the ocean. And if ever Scripture-truth was verified, the history of the cholera has done it as much as any event of which we have heard in profane story. I allude to the splendid description of God's omnipresence contained in the one hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm of David, where the holy singer thus speaks in the fulness of his heart: "O Eternal One, Thou hast searched me, and Thou knowest me; do I sit, do I rise, it is known to Thee; already afar Thou probest my thoughts, my walk and my couch Thou hast measured for me, and prepared all my ways. Before yet a word was upon my tongue, Thou, O Lord! didst know all!—Whither shall I go from thy spirit? and whither shall I flee from thy face? If I ascend to heaven, Thou art there, and if I should lie down in the abyss, I should find Thee there! Should I fly on the wings of the morning-dawn, to dwell at the farthest end of the sea: even there thy hand would lead me, and thy right hand would seize me. If I should say, Darkness shall surround me! then night even would become light around me; for darkness cannot darken aught from Thee, and night would shine like the day, and darkness and light are to Thee alike."—It is this certainty of the entire inefficacy of human agency which has caused us this day to meet here at the house of God, to ask of Him an especial redemption from the devouring pestilence which now afflicts us; *us*, I say, for although we may as yet be free from sickness, we know not how soon our turn may come; and are we not afflicted, when we are conscious that so many of our fellow-mortals are at this very moment groaning and sinking under affliction, which no human vigour can long sustain? Let us, then, understand the nature of our appeal to the Deity, and let us see if this appeal should not have an especial effect upon ourselves, before we can expect to have our prayers answered from Heaven. As in all investigations, relating to our private as well as our public life, we ought to search the Bible for instruction and reference, let us adopt this religious course also in the present instance. In the Bible we are told, that whenever affliction befals us, as soon as we find that our even path of existence becomes ruffled: we should turn our attention for succour to the Source of all goodness, and commence a rigid inquiry into our own conduct, so that, if we have acted amiss, we may begin to correct our errors, before we can with confidence look for a change in our misfortunes. And thus says Solomon in the prayer which he pronounced before all Israel at the time of the consecration of the temple which he had built for the worship of God: "When thy people Israel are smitten down before an enemy, because they have sinned against Thee, and shall turn again to Thee, and confess thy name, and pray and make supplication unto Thee in this house: then hear Thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy people Israel, and bring them again unto the land which Thou hast given to their fathers.—When the heaven is shut up and there is no rain, because they have sinned against Thee; if then they pray towards this place, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin, when Thou afflictest them: then hear Thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel; for Thou wilt teach them the good way wherein they should walk, and give rain upon thy land which Thou hast given to thy people for an inheritance.—If there be famine in the land, if there be pestilence, blasting, mildew, locusts, or if there be caterpillars; if their enemy besiege them in the land of their cities, whatsoever *plague or sickness* there be; what prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, who shall know every man the plague of his heart, and spread forth his hands towards this house: then hear Thou in heaven, thy dwelling-place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest (for Thou, even Thou only, knowest the hearts of all children of men), that they may fear Thee all the days that they live in the land which Thou gavest unto our fathers."—Here, brethren, we have a proper exposition of the nature of prayer, and of the objects for which all punishment is sent on earth.—You will have observed already, that in many parts of the Bible temporal punishments are uniformly threatened as a necessary consequence of dereliction from religious duties. Now, some may ask: "Why did Moses not say, that if you (the Israelites) will not obey the laws I have laid before you, you shall be punished after death, and specify the various degrees of punishment then to be inflicted?" To this we should answer: that both this life and the life everlasting are the creation of the same truly infinite Being. But man in his human existence, by which I would understand his sojourn on earth, is, as said on a former occasion, a compound of the finite and infinite; finite in so far as his body is composed of material substances; infinite, or at least what our understanding will distinguish by this appellation, in as far as his soul does not partake of the nature of matter. Now let it be observed, that in this state of being all ideas conveyed to our mind are borrowed in their forms and extent from the natural world. Thus are our joys always founded upon grounds which afford us pleasure, profit, or renown, things in themselves positive, or considered so by universal consent. And then, also, our grief is derived from causes which yield pain, infamy, poverty, or contempt. Perhaps, there may be found by an inquirer some more diversified and more minute descriptions of feelings; but for our present purpose it is enough to adopt merely the foregoing positions, without entering into a complex definition of the operations of our mind.—The truth of these positions is too self-evident to stand in need of argument, and let us, therefore, proceed to apply them to the subject of our to-day's consideration.—Pains and pleasures of this life are positive, that is to say, we can either count, measure, or at least survey their advantages or disadvantages; Moses, therefore, speaking to men, and not to angels, continually drew the attention of his hearers to the state of rewards and punishments which could befal the nation at large, as an evidence of the divine favour or displeasure. To argue from his silence on spiritual punishments and rewards after death, that the life everlasting is no part of the Mosaic dispensation, would only betray in him who makes the assertion the grossest ignorance of many passages in the Bible, which can only be explained upon the assumption, that the immortality of the soul, its reward and punishment, and the resurrection of the dead, were matters of universal belief among the Israelites of the first temple. Moses, however, did not speak, when speaking of rewards and punishments, with but few exceptions, of the individual Israelites, but of the whole nation together; thus, that their prosperity should depend upon obedience, and that disobedience would be sure to be followed by calamity. We may freely leave it to any one to answer, what kind of punishment, whether temporal or permanent, should be inflicted upon a nation? Surely the temporal appears to our understanding even to be the best manner for telling the world in a language not to be mistaken: "Upon this land rests the displeasure of God!"—If then any sudden and unexpected calamity comes over a land, or if the whole habitable globe even should suffer simultaneously under a severe affliction: it becomes us, as religious men, to ascribe it, not to chance, not to some fortuitous change in the atmosphere, not to some telluric poison, not to some extraordinary assemblage of insects, or all these and the like causes combined, acting without the express agency of the Supreme, but solely to his action, by which He wishes to affix his mark of displeasure upon mankind. Grant even to the deniers of a Providence all they ask, yield to them their assertion, that the air we breathe is pestiferous; that the exhalations of the earth are at this moment noxious vapours; that death is hidden in the water we drink, and in the food we take to sustain life; grant all this and more, for all this may be true, since we have no means of disproving it: and yet we, in common with every thinking being, must insist, that it is a judgment of Heaven; for God alone is capable of making the air more pestiferous than it commonly is; render the earth itself a propagator, as well as the parent, of a subtle infection, and cause our drink and food to be filled and secretly imbued with poison, destructive of life. The more natural causes you produce, the stronger becomes the evidence, that all we witness this day comes from Him who is the Maker of light, and the Creator of darkness.

"But why should this wrath be poured out upon earth? Does God ever exercise judgment, without a cause?"—No thought of this kind, brethren, ought ever to enter your mind; no Israelite, how little soever he may usually cogitate upon matters of religion, should suffer prejudice so gross to warp his mind, as to accuse the Supreme of injustice!—"But the Lord is righteous in all his ways, and upright in all his deeds!" The people of the world have sinned, and for the sake of their sins has judgment been executed on them.—We, indeed, flatter ourselves often, that the present age is the most enlightened one since the creation; we also assume to ourselves a certain share of piety, of pure religion, and of a freedom from superstition, unknown to our ancestors; and thus fancying, we imagine that we live in the peace of God, and need not to disturb our minds about the minor points, so we call them, of religious observance.—But we deceive ourselves: we are not more enlightened than were many ages in olden times; our virtue is at best but very questionable; our piety is often guided by interest and ambition; and (I will not include any of my hearers) there are many who make religion a profession, an axe to chop with, a handle to govern others, and a crown to glorify themselves, not before God, for this would be laudable, but before men, and this is the very acmé of hypocrisy. I do not exaggerate; this is not, I acknowledge, a true picture of all, but certainly of a vast number of those who outwardly profess religion. But what shall I say of the great mass of unbelievers, who, if even reluctantly compelled to admit the existence of a God (I almost shudder when I speak it), so circumscribe, in their vain imaginings, his power, as merely to constitute Him, the searcher of hearts, a passive looker-on on the affairs of this world? And what are the consequences of this heresy, and of that which asserts "there is no law from Heaven?" but that immorality has progressed with frightful rapidity, that dissoluteness and drunkenness show themselves in the face of day, and that acts of irreligion are barely thought reprehensible! Do these assertions offend us? how much more should we feel ashamed, that sheer truth must compel every reflecting mind to make an acknowledgment of the distressing fact *to himself*, if even compassion for his fellow-creatures prevents him from speaking *aloud* his conviction. Do we want proof? our own eyes are daily disgusted with the multitude of those, whose evident marks of dissipation prove them to be destined to an untimely grave. Drunkenness and profanity few of their votaries deign even to hide by the flimsy veil of hypocrisy; and unfortunately we all here assembled have seen and felt enough to convince us, that all religious feelings are often thrown aside, even by many grown gray in its service, as a man would cast off a worn-out garment, no longer fit for decent covering; and the house of God is deserted, because forsooth, we must by main force compel God to give us riches, and the days of the Lord's appointment are therefore looked upon as no better than other days, for the reasoning, that we are not born to starve! And is this not true?—And since no one can gainsay it, why then, I ask, shall we express aught of astonishment at the judgment which is even now in the course of being inflicted upon the earth? It is our sins that have made a division between us and our God, and justly do we suffer, for we have been rebellious against his words.

Since now we acknowledge in God the Dispenser of the punishment, we have to-day assembled to ask of Him, by prayer, to stay the evil, and to come to our help; since He who has afflicted is alone able to save us!—But before we dare to hope for assistance, we must first look into our conduct, to see what requires amendment, what total disuse, and what virtues neglected are again to be cultivated!—God is merciful; this our daily experience teaches us, since He suffers the sun to shine upon the wicked as well as the good; since He strikes not down the sinner at the moment of his transgression, but permits him to live and repent. Nevertheless, calamities are the concomitants of sin; and if even the transgressor imagines, that a long côurse of vice, having so long remained without just recompense, will for ever remain unpunished: he will to his sorrow find, that the Eye above watches unceasingly, and that the ears of the Lord are ever open to the cries of the oppressed orphan and the complaints of the wronged widow; and punishment will come, when, perhaps, least expected. Ay, calamities are the rods in the hands of God, and with them He chastises the rebellious and careless, that they may return, repent, and live! Let this day, then, be the commencement of a sincere return to God, and let us be mindful of the words of the prophet, who says:

לכו ונשובה אל ה׳ כי הוא טרף וירפאנו יך ויחבשנו :
הושע ו׳ א׳ :

"O come and let us return unto the Lord; for He hath torn and will also heal us; He hath smitten us, and will also bind up our wounds." Hosea vi. 1.

Here the Bible teaches us some valuable lessons, which, permit me briefly to enumerate.—The first is, that whatever befals us, be it evil, be it good, is the work of the Lord; chance has no agency in the direction of affairs, and whatever of healing, whatever of wounds we find, is therefore to be ascribed to the Supreme Source.—The second consideration is, that nothing happens without cause, that is to say, no calamity, either individual or national, is sent without there is sin for its origin, and amendment as its object.—As the third consequence we are taught, that by repentance the punishment may be averted before it comes, or be suspended after it has already begun its ravages.—But what is repentance? Is it merely to enter the house of God after a long absence, perhaps, and say to Him: "O our Father, we have sinned!" and repeat thereafter our former course? Ay, if even we fast an entire day, nay, periodically for forty days, to equal, as far as our feeble strength will permit, the time of Moses's presence on Mount Sinai, is this repentance, I ask?—No, brethren, this is mere lip-worship, a repentance in which the heart has no share, and such conduct is denounced by Isaiah, who says: "Forasmuch as this people draw near with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear towards me is taught by the precepts of men: therefore, behold I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a miracle; for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid." (Isaiah xxix. 13, 14.)—Repentance must not consist in *mere* outward show, for though men might be imposed upon by the specious appearance of the seeming repentant, God will not be; and what avails the opinion of the world in matters of virtue, where our Father above is the sole judge?—Nor, although we must condemn hypocrisy of the kind just described, can the other species be approved of, which would induce a man to speak thus: "I acknowledge my error—I am sorry for it—I wish it were otherwise; but my situation in life compels me to do as others do;" or, "Vice has grown upon me by long indulgence as a second nature, and my very existence is threatened, if I mend now." How often has repentance been pushed off by such pretexts! How numberless are the victims of this most dangerous hypocrisy! for a reasoner of this class imagines, there is no wrong in his doings; for since he cannot avoid sinning, he cannot be blamed, and consequently that he ought not to be punished for it. But there is an error of the most fatal kind at the bottom of all this. Let us examine, for instance, the drunkard's plea: that drinking has become absolutely necessary to him, and that abstinence would be followed by death.—The latter assertion may be true; but what then? Was it not wrong in the first instance to commence the sinful course? Now, even suppose that his life should be the forfeit of his repentance (which is, however, very doubtful), would it not be better for him to die in virtue, if he thereby can obtain the forgiveness he so much needs, rather than live in degradation and die in sin?—I merely adopt this example as an illustration, and for every answer: "I cannot help sinning," we may find an equally strong, and even a much stronger refutation!—Upon the whole, it is as much the duty of the sinner to repent at all hazards, as it is the original duty of all men to act uprightly from the beginning of life at every sacrifice; and there is at the same time no distinction between men, why one should be absolutely compelled to be bad, whilst another is good. And if we find the circumstances around us calculated to draw us into vice and irreligion, we are bound to get rid of them; and if we but begin, we shall have soon ample means afforded us to carry our reformation into effect; as we are taught by our wise men: "Whoever comes to purify himself, will be aided from Heaven."

Having thus shown the danger of hypocrisy on the one side, and self-deception, which is but another species of hypocrisy, on the other, let us go a little farther into the extent of repentance. Repentance, to be real, must neither be partial nor temporary; and if you once begin to find yourselves in the wrong, if you discover, lurking in your bosom, the demon of impiety or insincerity, it is your duty to root out the evil. Do not merely, to use a physical simile, cover it with a cataplasm, to eradicate it by degrees, but go resolutely to work and, applying the knife of reformation, stop not till even the springs and roots of the malady are extracted. This alone can be a reformation, upon which the Almighty, who knoweth all secrets, can look with pleasure; for every thing short of this is but self-deception, since although we apparently attempt to deceive the Deity, we cannot do so, as He knoweth all the secrets of our hearts. And much as a sincere repentance is approved of in Scriptures, we find a hollow and insincere confession of sin denounced as unpleasing and abhorrent to the God of truth. For so we read in the seventy-eighth Psalm: "Nevertheless, they sinned again, and they trusted not in his wonders. In vain endeavours passed away their lives, and their years in thoughtlessness. They sought Him when He smote them, repented, and called on God, well remembering that God was their Rock, and the Most High God their Redeemer. And yet they thought to deceive Him with their mouth, and with their tongue they wished to lie to Him, but their heart was not faithful to Him, and they were not true to his covenant; but He, being merciful, forgave the iniquity, destroyed them not, withdrew often his anger, and poured not out the whole of his wrath."

Let me therefore beseech you, brethren! on this day of wo and lamentation, to reflect that we, in part, as members of the human family, are, through our misconduct, the cause that the pestilence now walketh abroad. And well has the destroyer fulfilled the command given him! He appears within the walls of a city, and the affrighted inhabitants fly as before the pursuing sword of a vengeful foe! Anon, the men skilled in the craft of healing endeavour to grapple with the enemy; they marshal their forces, as well becomes those who ween themselves to be the guardians of our health, and in truth may deserve our thanks, under Heaven, for the care with which they apply the skill and experience which God has vouchsafed them. But wo! neither flying nor skilful endeavours can shield the city; and in the haunts of dissoluteness, amongst the nightly revellers, in the house of the drunkard, soon the groans of dreadful sufferings tell, that here breaks a heart that expected not the stroke of death! And desolation and mourning are carried into the bosom of many a virtuous family even (for so is the sad visitation), and the number of the dying are hourly increased, until the very heart within our bosom sinks, and the chill of apprehension seizes hold of the stoutest mind!—And all this is the fruit of sin, the consequence of our transgression; and yet we hesitate, we seem barely to heed the warning, as though it spoke not as loudly as ever the prophet's voice did! "Return ye, for why will you die, O house of Israel?" And O, say not: "It is too late now,—the plague is once upon us, we cannot expect to be favoured;" no, it is never too late, for come with a sincere heart, and you will be heard by your Father, even in the hour of pressing danger; for we are promised in the fiftieth Psalm: "And but call upon me, in the day of trouble, I will save thee, if thou but honourest me."—This is the language of God to his children; and it is we only who reject the gracious boon by our perverseness and obduracy, in thinking too little of the word of the Lord, where so many glorious promises are held out, to encourage the virtuous in his onward course, and the sinner to repentance.—But neither should the contemptuous say: "The danger will soon be over, and in a few days, all will be safe again!" by which he would argue, that there is no necessity for repentance. But why? is the danger over when the pestilence has passed away? may it not return with fearful violence, and sweep off, as its first victim, perhaps, the very man, who thinks all is right with him? And again, is this disease the only instrument of punishment? we all know that this is not so; and, although the present occasion is peculiarly suited to awaken our attention: there are a thousand occurrences in our daily experience calculated to admonish us, that we are always in the hands of God, and that in the midst of life we are in death!—Another one may say: "Why shall I repent, I see no others doing so, and what good can my example do?" Thus reasons the one, who is in all his doings guided by fashion; but the wise should resolve to do his duty at all risks, to exercise the right, if even he stands alone; and as for the benefits of an individual's example, every person, even the most humble, can do great service to virtue, since we know not, by what chain of events the efforts of the most lowly, and the example of the most obscure, may bring even a king upon his throne to repentance.

Another objection, which the ignorant may perhaps urge, it behoves us to refute. It may be asked: "Since the soul is immortal, and since life is so surrounded by dangers, why is it desirable that we should live?"—If it were, indeed, that every human being were entirely isolated, unconnected with any other member of the human family, it might be at times, to judge superficially, a matter of indifference, whether a man were to die or to live. But, as every man is more or less connected with others of his species, as upon the life and health of one man the welfare of perhaps thousands depends, the subject under consideration assumes a different aspect. The good may die, as far as he himself is concerned, with perfect advantage to himself; but the world cannot well spare him; he is, so to say, a beacon, by which other navigators of the ocean of life must steer their course! And what is more animating, what more exciting to virtue, than to see the aged, patriarchal sage dispensing the experience, which his long and glorious life of wisdom and virtue has endowed him with? And oh, when his benignant smile is at length stayed by death, when his benevolent eye is at length extinguished, how lightly does the earth seem to drop upon the coffin of the departed, and the grass and flowers that deck his grave seem to shed fragrance and blessing around them!—And the sinner—is he fit to die? where are his deeds of righteousness with which he can appear before God? and he shall, as a matter of indifference, be suddenly cut off? And truly, to the world his departure can cause no sorrow—his presence will scarcely be missed by men;—but to himself, how dreary the prospect! to die—his sins unrepented, his transgressions unforgiven, and his *soul* doomed to punishment, till the Almighty Judge shall have decreed her sufferings as sufficient atonement! It is, therefore, that long life is a blessing; for the virtuous is blest, whilst blessing others, and the sinner is thereby indulged with ability to repent and be forgiven! To be forgiven! this idea is the bright star in the gloom of trouble! to be forgiven if we repent, for God is kind! to be received back again in the mansion of our Father, if we return! How long this indulgence may be left us, it behoves us not to guess at, since God has called forth the pestilence to destroy; and we, therefore, should all look upon ourselves as dying men, as we know not whose bosom may next be perforated by the arrows of death which are scattered abroad. Let this day then be the commencement of a serious reformation, so that, if we are taken hence, we may be admitted into happiness; and that, if even this be the last day that we shall be gratified here on earth by a view of the heavens, by the light of the sun, the verdure of the fields, and the song of the woodland songsters when they warble forth their morning hymn to their Maker; if even this be the last hour, that we shall be permitted to see our friends; if even this be the last time, that we are in the house of God—we yet may be forgiven and received into God's favour, and that, when our soul awakens from the dream of earthly existence and the trance of death, she may join in with the chorus of angels and the rejoicings of the saints, whose resting-place is now around the throne of Glory, overshadowed by the grace of the Eternal One!

O Lord! grant us life and salvation, spare us from the devouring scourge, which Thou hast appointed, to warn nations to repentance; but if Thou hast decreed death upon us, or any of thy children, let then our departure and pain of dying be an expiation for our crimes, and receive us in favour in thy presence. Amen!

Menachem 12th. } 5592.
August 8th. }

NOTE.—The foregoing address was written for the occasion of the day of fasting, prayer, and humiliation, proclaimed by Governor Wolf, whilst the cholera raged in Philadelphia. It made its first appearance in America, about the eighth of June at Quebec, and in the beginning of August it reached its highest point of malignity in this place. It declined after the middle of that month; but returned two years later, although in a much milder form, and with a less extensive range. It is remarkable enough, that not one adult died, of this disease, among the Israelites of this place.

DISCOURSE XXIII.

OBEDIENCE AND REPENTANCE.

O, OUR FATHER AND KING! we have sinned before Thee,—pardon Thou our transgressions! O, our God! we have been disobedient to thy will—do Thou forgive the children of thy servants in thy unbounded mercy!—And show us in pity and kindness, that they are safe who trust in Thee; that they are not lost who seek forgiveness at the foot of thy throne; and grant us life and salvation, and avert from us the evil which our misdeeds may have merited, and vouchsafe to accept in favour our fasting and prayer. Amen.

BRETHREN!

It is but a few days since we listened in this place to the sound of the cornet, which was to renew in our hearts the acknowledgment of God's almighty power, and to rouse our minds to devotional feelings and repentance.—Let us hope, that knowing the object of the blowing of the shophar, it has not sounded in vain to our ears;—that in this and other communities it has made some hearts conscious of their weakness; and that they have been reinduced, feeling the unworthiness of their course, to espouse the cause of sacred religion, firmly resolved to unite themselves so closely to their God, that this bond of union shall never more again be broken. To bind ourselves to God—that is the chief, in fact the only, duty which the law demands of us, and by it is understood an affectionate regard to the precepts of religion, an entire reliance upon divine Providence, and a cheerful resignation to God's dispensation.—I say that this feeling may be termed the *only duty* which we have to fulfil; for where the heart is so imbued, obedience to the details of the law is the necessary consequence; and in return, it is the result of a life of the most devoted piety. To effect this end, therefore, is the object of all the commandments we have received; and to prevent our ever losing sight of the same we have many ceremonial observances, which uniformly tend to arrest our attention, so that by being often led to inquire into the nature of religion, we may be brought to apply the circumstances and events connected with them to ourselves, and thus be rendered more thoughtful, more contemplative, and in consequence more rational and more pious!—As a consequence from this exposition, we should never let any religious act be performed by ourselves, or see it performed by others, without our making an application of it to our situation, and suffering it in this manner to have the desired effect upon us.—The effect desired by the divine law is, primarily, obedience; in the next place, action; thirdly, improvement; and lastly, our happiness! Observe, brethren, that not one religious duty is the result of a mere whim of the Deity; for no matter how unimportant soever any thing may seem to us, it is intended for our moral, and perhaps also our physical, improvement.—But what are the fruits of piety? Contentment and satisfaction;—contentment with the lot which the Almighty may have assigned to us, be it humble, be it high; and satisfaction with ourselves—not that pompous self-sufficiency which would teach us to look upon ourselves as perfect, and every one else as far beneath us, but that sort of mental ease, of calmness, which arises from a review of a life unstained by irreligion, not deformed by moral turpitude.—And these are the fruits of the union with God which was alluded to above; and what earthly treasures are beyond them in value? are riches, are power and glory—are honour and notoriety to be classed with them? where are the riches which ever gave contentment and satisfaction? when did power and glory leave a mortal nothing more to sigh for? and did you ever see that man who was honoured of men and renowned for wisdom, at whose heart the canker-worm of dissatisfaction gnawed not with greedy fatality?—But the truly pious, who looks upon the will of God as the purest source of all that is valuable, and who regards his word as the essence of wisdom, can never be said to be miserable, can never be utterly bereft of all treasures; for he carries that within him which no riches can buy, ay, that which the king on his throne, even on the very day of triumph, might envy, for it is the invaluable treasure of an inward peace of mind. And taking this standard then as the measure of happiness, we may inquire: "Without an inward peace of mind, how can life be happy? without a peace with God, how can our mind, our life be peaceful? without a love to God, how can we have his peace? without his religion, how can we love Him?"—Thus should we reason, brethren! and if we do this, we must of necessity turn our view from the world without to the mind within, and if we find not peace there we will, if we have not altogether closed our eyes against the only remedy within our reach, endeavour to introduce into our soul the love of God and of his law, as a restorative to heal the wounds of our agonized spirit.

This view at once brings us to the inquiry: "If piety is so valuable, what means are we to use to acquire it?" To this we answer,—Obedience and repentance. "What is obedience?" It is not merely an acknowledgment in words of the justness of the divine commands, not a mere theoretical acquiescence in the truth of revelation,—but also a cheerful and ever ready compliance with the demands of religion. In other words, faith and belief alone, though they are the guides to piety, are not the sole component parts thereof, for deeds alone can finish the beautiful structure of mental greatness, which listening to the doctrines of faith and a confidence in their truth have commenced in the soul of man; or to comprehend the whole in one sentence, religion should both be inward and outward! "And repentance?" is that state of regret for past misconduct and that atonement for errors, which should be resorted to, when we discover that our inward peace has been destroyed by a neglect of the laws of God, or by an absolute contravention to the decrees of the holy Torah; or in other words, we should regret our past conduct, and act differently from what we used to do, as soon as we discover that we have strayed from the righteous path. Thus also speaks the prophet:

שובה ישראל עד ה׳ אלהיך כי כשלת בעונך : קחו
עמכם דברים ושובו אל ה׳ אמרו אליו כל תשא עון
וקח טוב ונשלמה פרים שפתינו : הושע יד׳ ב׳–ג׳ :

"Return, O Israel, to the Lord thy God, for thou hast stumbled through thy iniquity! Turn but with prayer unto the Lord, and say, Thou Pardoner of all iniquity! accept our return to good, and receive our words as the offered steers." Hosea xiv. 2–3.

"Return, O Israel to the Lord thy God!" this is the call which the Shepherd addresses to the strayed flock; it is the language of encouragement spoken by the Almighty himself to the reluctant, trembling sinner; it is the paternal invitation held out by the indulgent Father to the oft-offending and rebellious child. To understand now properly this prophetic call, this invitation to the purifying and reconsecration of ourselves to divine service, let us examine a little more minutely the nature of our dependence upon God, the causes of our transgressions, and the effect which the indulgence in sin must have upon us.—To the first inquiry, "What is the nature of our relation to the Deity? in what respect are we said to be dependent upon Him?" we answer: Man is indebted for his existence and preservation to God; that is to say, without a Creator, no being can exist, and without the continued watchfulness of this Creator no created being can be preserved in existence. We are, therefore, absolutely speaking, not only the mere works of God, with whom He can act as pleases Him best, but also nothing without Him, since if He does not bless our efforts, all our toiling is in vain; and thus too our daily experience proves to us, that not to the strong is the battle; not to the swift, the race; not to the industrious, riches, and not to the wise, bread. This position being admitted, that we are nothing without God: it follows that being so dependent, it should be our study to deserve God's favour; or, what is the same, we should strive, being certified of the will of God, to live conformably to the precepts contained in the record of the divine will. To the reflecting mind, therefore, piety, both theoretical and practical, is the most natural, and so far, therefore, from its being the effect of ignorance, it springs from the best of knowledge, the knowledge of ourselves.—"What now are the causes of sin?"—Man, being unmindful of his origin, and confident in his conceit of his own importance, neglects to look with becoming deference to the will of God, and acts not as his reason dictates, but as his passions or supposed interests lead. A man so constituted in mind imagines himself to be something superior to the rest of his fellow-beings, or he thinks he has too great an interest at stake to be able to attend to the duties of a pious life; and being thus, as it were, all in all to himself, he weens he needs no farther improvement; his perfection he conceives to be complete; and consequently the voice of religion cannot find in him a willing listener; and as soon as this is the case, the floodgates of iniquity are opened, and sins upon sins, crimes upon crimes, are heaped upon the heart of the selfish, proud reasoner, and he stands a hideous spectacle of blasted moral deformity.—Another cause of irreligion can be found in carelessness and a desire for pleasure, which are fully as pernicious as the preceding cause. Some one imagines himself to be *beneath* the notice of Providence; he thinks that One so elevated beyond all earthly influence, as the God we adore, will not notice (it being, as he thinks, unworthy of the Divine Nature) the actions of man; and since God does not regard our conduct, it would be needless to pay any attention to the duties of religion, by which we are taught to bridle our passions and to rein in our desires; and consequently the voluptuary thus underrating his importance in the eyes of the Omniscient hurries on eager for his ruin, till virtue is neglected, and sin has become a habit too inveterate almost for reformation!—But who of you, brethren, sees not the folly of both the above excuses for sin?—One boasts of the superiority of his reasoning—ay, his superior wisdom—excellent moral energy!—and in what are they displayed? in charity? in filial piety? in enlightening the ignorant? in devotion! No, in avarice, in the pursuit of ambition, in idle declamation, and in dissoluteness, perhaps too in ridiculing those who dare to follow the better counsels of reason guided by the truths of revelation.—The irreligious scorns the humble believer, and asks him: "What avails all piety?" But with how much more justice must the moralist laugh at all the vain pursuits of mankind who strut, full of their own importance, their brief space on the stage of life, and are then hurried hence into oblivion, into the total darkness of utter forgetfulness.—Look at the ambitious tyrant, how he is toiling to oppress his subjects, look at his fury when seeing his commands unobeyed—and then behold him again struck by the sudden dart of the pestilence, and all his power broken; and the veriest menial in his palace would not change situations with him, who was but a few hours before envied and feared by all mankind!—The philosopher who scoffs at the credulity, so he calls it, of others, is not immortal; for years he has poured forth his blasphemy; he has even shocked his fellow-workmen in iniquity by his daring attacks on all that is sacred; perhaps he imagines that he has succeeded in erecting to his name a monument of greatness, and that his system of selfish utility will rise triumphant above the ruins of religion; but turn your eye upon him now, he is smitten down with palsy, hear his indistinct murmurings, and the only articulate sounds he has uttered during his illness are prayers for a few more fleeting hours of existence!—Again, you call the rich man happy;—his interest demanded his unceasing attention, *honest* he was always, for he prided himself upon the name of correct, punctual merchant; but religion and the exercise of charity he knew barely by name, they belonged not to the routine of business, and he therefore had no relish for them. But death arrested him in the midst of his endeavours; and with not half his wants satisfied, he is borne to the grave, and strangers riot in his riches!

Now tell me, doubter! are such pursuits superior to the active exercise of religion, whereby imperishable good will be treasured up, not here—where all is mortal—but there in heaven, where no cankerworm devours the fruit of virtuous deeds, where no decay destroys imperishable monuments of God's favour, where no death cuts off the life everlasting? If even, therefore, interest and wisdom alone were to teach us, we ought from preference to choose piety. But it would not be consonant with true religion to serve God from motives of being rewarded; for what does the law say? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might," meaning the love towards God should be, not the respect of the servant who hopes for reward when his work is done, but like the love which the dutiful child bears towards the parent, where all the duties, even those more arduous than a servant can perform, are cheerfully submitted to without the hope of reward or favour.

Having thus briefly examined the futility of pride as an excuse of sin, let us turn to the second chief reason, carelessness.—The careless one says, "God regards not our course of life, it is unworthy of his greatness to imagine that He should trouble himself about the conduct of mortals."—But is it true, that it is beneath the dignity of God?—Pray, inform us, if thou canst, careless sinner, what is deserving of God's notice? Is it to regulate the course of the stars? the arrangement of nature? the calling into being of all things? These, surely, thou too wouldst call objects of grandeur—transcendent majesty; and yet they all are no more than thou art; for the *word* that formed *thee*, formed *them* too, and however little thou mayest value *thy* importance, thou wast created, as well as the brightest star in the wide expanse of heaven, for the glory of thy Maker!—If man would thus take a correct view of his own importance in the scale of beings, he would act as becomes his dignity, and the station he occupies as an intelligent creature of the Supreme Author, and he would never suffer his life to pass away in the mere pursuits of pleasure and the empty nothings of this world.

The Scriptures too inveigh against this sheltering of ourselves behind the idea of our being of but small importance, and they emphatically teach us that nothing whatever, not excepting the acts of mortal men, is beneath the notice of God, for He surveys all without any effort, and from his all-searching gaze nothing is hidden.—And thus speaks the Psalmist: "Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph! They oppress thy people, and afflict thy heritage; they slay the widow and stranger, and murder the fatherless; and say, The Lord seeth not, and the God of Jacob regardeth it not. But understand, ye brutish among the people, and ye fools, when will ye be wise? He, that planteth the ear, shall He not hear? He, that formeth the eye, shall He not see? He, that chastiseth nations, shall he not correct? He, that teacheth man knowledge, shall He not know?"—And if man would but reflect, that to Him, who created the *materials* of creation, it cannot make any difference of exertion whether He produces the greatest or the smallest thing known; that the same creative energy called forth, by his mere word, the hosts of constellations and the humble worm of the earth: he would never think that any thing could by any possibility be hidden from God; for if He knows the course of nature in the aggregate; if to his omniscience the beginning and the consummation of all is known, can it be otherwise than that He should also know all that passes, all that is transacted in all creation, if even each star and every planet should be peopled by intelligent beings, who like us act and think?—But it is useless almost to argue with one predetermined to sin; he will strive to prove to you, that there is no positive wrong in his conduct; that it is immaterial upon the whole, if he do this or omit doing the other; and either under the plea of insignificance or superior mental endowments he will act as his tastes, interest, passions, or folly, may counsel him.

These briefly are the causes of sin, as far as I can speak of them with confidence; much more may be said about the ramifications in which these causes divide themselves, but the limits of an address do not permit me to enlarge any more upon them. Having thus seen the motives, let us view the effects of transgression. To understand the pernicious effects of sin, you should look with proper care upon the benefits of virtue, and the contrast will teach you, emphatically, the advantages and disadvantages of either.—The virtuous will look upon himself as a servant of God, amenable for every part of his conduct to a Superior Tribunal. In accordance with this consciousness, he will be humble in his own person; not too confident in asserting the claims of his own merit; meek and submissive to others, where mere superiority of rank or the maintenance of pride can be the result; kind to those who are his inferiors in life; charitable to those who may need his gifts; considerate to the unfortunate; respectful to superiors, parents, and teachers: he will be the obedient son, affectionate husband, and watchful father; withal cheerful in his own mind; in short, he will always be at peace with God, his fellow-men, and himself!—But the vicious is haughty, and is, as it were, alone in the world, for nothing can, in his estimation, be superior to self; and in accordance with this assumption he will be overbearing in his own person; always setting forth his superior claims to excellence; insolent and arrogant to others, never allowing them any superiority, and will consider an offence against his dignity as almost the greatest crime; he will be cold and distant to his subordinates, even though they possess superior merit; niggardly to the poor; oppressive to the unfortunate; cringing, low and servile to those above him, although he hates them in his heart; rebellious to the commands of his parents or teachers: he will be the disobedient son; unkind husband, and cruel father; withal gloomy in his own mind; in short, he will always be at war with God, with his fellow-beings, and with himself!—These are the fruits of virtue, and these the results of vice. It needs no eloquence to impress upon your minds the beauty of the one, and the deformity of the other; and yet we hear many descanting upon the pleasures they enjoy in their course of sin, and laughing at those who act differently from them. Ay, they are for a time intoxicated with the maddening draughts of seductive vice; they are overwhelmed with the moral delirium of dissipation; but at length, be this consummation sooner or later, they awake from their unnatural trance, alive to all the horror of their exposed situation, and at the brink of ruin they discover (to employ the words of Scripture), that their way, which had appeared just in their eyes, was in truth, the way to death and destruction!—Imagine now, brethren, what indeed you actually see almost every hour, the sinner at length regretting the little benefit and the immense injury acruing to him as the wages of sin, when he discovers, when almost too late, that all the subterfuges, which passions invented, are not able to hide, even from his jaundiced vision, the destructive end to which he has been hurrying: imagine him, I say, at this natural termination of all wickedness—what must his *feelings* be? whither shall he fly for consolation? To his own family? Them he has neglected, perhaps has been to them the cause of thousand-fold misery and disgrace. To his friends and associates in transgression?—they despise the weak fool who no longer is willing to devote heart, body, and soul, to their proceedings; they despise and scorn the timid and broken-down boon companion, and they will no longer endure his fellowship; much less are they disposed to follow his advice about resigning their pleasures, and will even say: "You speak now, when you are weak and old, of regret and amendment; so too we will do, when we have rioted as long as you; when our strength has become exhausted, just as yours is now; when our appetite has become cloyed by excess of enjoyment." Shall he turn for refuge to society, to mankind at large? No, he has been their enemy; he has trampled upon their laws, and has derided their institutions; and even now they are leading him off to the place of confinement, there to expiate his offences against the ordinances of society.—Where then shall he find refuge?—Even in that venerable faith, which to him spoke not with the voice of the parent, because he was deaf to its admonitions; even in the bosom of that Church, a native in whose covenant he was ashamed to confess himself; even in the hope of salvation of that God, whose laws he refused to regard with reverence and after whose inscrutable ways he madly dared to search; for thus speaks the word: "Return, O Israel, to the Lord thy God, for thou hast stumbled through thy iniquity." And let every man, every sinful mortal (for all men are sinful) but take this comfort to his agonized soul, and the healing balm will not be wanting; and if even much wrong has been committed, let every one who seeks, because he needs, for mercy, reflect (as teach our wise men) "that the gates of mercy are never closed;" let him, who is in want of consolation, but fearlessly yet humbly approach, and he may rest assured that his entreaty will not be in vain; for as Jeremiah says (Lamentations, iii. 25): "The Lord is kind to those who put their trust in Him, to the soul that seeketh Him!" But there must not be any species of duplicity in this seeking, in this return to good: there must not be holding out the left hand as it were to Heaven, and seizing with the right the goods and pleasures of life with an unrelenting grasp; for this would not be a return to the Lord with all our hearts; on the contrary, it could at best amount to no more than merely resigning that part of our enjoyments or occupations which has grown intolerable to us, from the entire want of satisfaction it has hitherto afforded, or the positive pain it may have produced. But a return to the Lord, one that deserves the name, should not merely be a regret of evil, but a positive return to good, so that we may be enabled to say in sincerity: "O Pardoner of all iniquity, accept our return to good!" for nothing less than this can be satisfactory to our heavenly Father, who, knowing every secret of the human breast, cannot be deceived by outward appearances, and cannot be satisfied whilst He discovers deceit lurking along with professed penitence!

"How then shall we repent?—What means are we to employ to return to good?"—As soon as we are made conscious, that our conduct is not such as we would like to be known to all the world; as soon as we feel a *burning* sensation of shame, of self-reproach; the moment we feel by reflection or the admonition of others that we have acted unworthily of the dignity of human nature, unbecoming the duties obligatory upon us as children of God: we should unhesitatingly set about removing the cause of self-reproach or the public reprehension; we should pretermit repeating the act, and at the same time endeavour to make reparation. If we have wronged another in his possessions, person, or reputation, we should make reparation in kind; that is to say, we should restore the stolen or wrongfully obtained property, and add the fifth part of the value thereto, as the law dictates; if we have committed a personal injury, we should endeavour to restore an equivalent in personal pleasures to the injured party, as far as may be possible; and if we have injured our neighbour in reputation, we are bound to make public declaration that we have been unjust to him, and we dare not withdraw ourselves behind our *greatness* if the offence has been committed towards an inferior; for we should reflect that before God the greatest is no more than the least; it must therefore make no difference to us what standing our wronged fellow-men may occupy in regard to ourselves. Having made reparation, it will next be necessary to obtain his forgiveness, if even we should thereby be compelled to humble ourselves; and let not the advice of our pride ever prevent us from complying in this particular with the requisitions of religion; and this part of repentance becomes the more necessary if we should be unable to make reparation in kind. But in case our offended friend be no longer in life, or if the offence be one only between our God and ourselves, the repentance due to Heaven should, nevertheless, not consist in a mere repentance of the heart alone. Acts, too, should in this case, as well as in the preceding, declare our sincerity; and although to make a public show under ordinary circumstances would be inexpedient, yet it is necessary that the acts of religion and the inward penitence should become manifest enough to others, to prove that a reformation has taken place in the mind of the sinner. And oh! let no man be restrained from following this course because of the taunts of the irreligious world, or from fear of being thought insincere, nor let him be deterred by the difficulties of a thorough reformation; but let him proceed, under whatever disadvantages he may labour, and he may safely trust that the positive determination to brave all for the sake of his God, will cause the work to be of much easier accomplishment than he may himself imagine; and let him be mindful of the just advice contained in the saying of the rabbins: "Whoever comes to purify himself will be assisted from heaven!" At the same time if the sinner wishes to be forgiven, he must take especial care that his repentance consist not merely in one act of reformation; but as soon as he begins his return to God, he must leave his evil ways entirely, and endeavour to forget his having been accustomed to sin; and as his life has during his season of wickedness been rendered miserable, because he had not the peace of God, he should strive with all his energy so to live henceforward as to possess this all-valuable privilege of the righteous.

And if this privilege be once more reobtained, how sweetly will all nature smile again; if even the tears of repentance should then bedew thy cheek; if even the burning of shame should now and then assail thy heart, returning brother! thy peace with thy God will have been restored. The sufferings thou wilt meet with will then appear the chastisements of Mercy, sent to purify thee from former pollution, and in place of former restlessness of spirit thou wilt have mental quietness; and in place of the hatred thou once didst feel for thy species, love and compassion will reign in thy breast; and in place of stubborn resistance to the will of God, thou wilt submit to his just decrees with meekness and cheerful resignation!

A reformation which is to effect this is the one designated by the law and prophets as the true offering to the Deity, and this is the contrite spirit which God will never despise.—Let us then unite, brethren, at this season appointed by our religion as the time emphatically devoted to repentance, to seek again our Lord and his goodness; it may be that we shall be graciously accepted before Him; it may be that we shall obtain a commutation of the evil which may have been decreed against us, and be received in favour by the Source of all mercy and forgiveness! Now indeed is the favourable time! We lately prayed here, in this house of God, to spare us in the midst of the pestilence which then was raging around us! Our prayer was heard, and not one of our number has been taken away, and we are here again to thank the Lord for all his goodness! But how shall we thank Him? No words can express the gratitude we should feel! Many of us have been afflicted with the pestilence which has slain its myriads; but none have been removed. What then but additional devotion can we offer, what else should we do, but to nerve ourselves to live more strictly in the ways of the Lord, than we have hitherto been accustomed to do? The observances of our religion, strict though they be, slay no one, let that be borne in mind; and the little calls which they may make upon our possessions and leisure bear no proportion to the pains, and time, and wealth we bestow, one and all, upon our worldly pursuits.—Let us be more punctual as a body in attending at the house of God! Let me entreat you, brethren, in this perhaps my last address to you, to forget each of you the peculiar grievance he may have to complain of. I know that in a society like ours, where every man thinks himself, and in fact, is upon an equality with his brother, every man too deems himself of equal importance with the other, and imagines his advice deserves to be listened to with all due deference. I will admit that this should be so in part; yet this grants no one the right, either according to religion or common sense, to separate himself from the congregation; no one should deem his own grievance too great for forgiveness; since if this were so, how can we, any one, the best of us, hope for pardon from Heaven,—we, who have all so grievously sinned? I may, though I hope not to do so, offend by my present remarks; but long since have I felt deeply in spirit for the loneliness which our place of worship presents! no one can imagine how much grief it must cause any sincere lover of his religion, to see so little true respect paid to the sacred edicts, which have been the admiration of the heathens even; to see how we, in this free country, where we are at liberty to worship our God according to our holy faith, without molestation, show our stubbornness by seeking every pursuit but that of Heaven, frequent every place but the house of God! Brethren, this ought not to be; let us wipe this reproach from us; let it not be said, and said with truth, that the churches of other denominations are filled with attentive audiences, whilst our Synagogues are nearly empty! Why should this be? is not our faith as pure as the light of heaven? is not our form of worship highly impressive? is not our law as ancient as the descent upon Sinai? Let us throw off the burden of this stigma upon our name, let us be more united, and let each person contribute to the public benefit by his purse, as far as the means will allow with which God has blest him, and by personal attendance where it may be needed. Let not one of us all hold back his contribution, because of one silly reason or other; for be assured, brethren, that before God's judgment no fictitious excuses will avail aught, whatever the world may think of them here.

Since now we must all acknowledge, that we have been signally favoured, much more than our merits deserve: we should in an equal degree also be more inclined to religious feelings, more ready to be grateful to God for his kindness. I hope therefore that my words will have some weight, and let me entreat you all to pay for once something more than transient attention to my remarks. We have been spared, not one of our number has fallen: let us do our best to deserve God's protection for a longer period. Perhaps this may be the last year that many of us shall have the felicity to celebrate a Sabbath of Repentance, and to look forward for a Day of Atonement; O let us not then madly hasten hence before the judgment of Heaven, with professions of religion on our lips, whilst in truth we do every thing to injure permanently the cause of our faith, by pulling down, almost literally, the walls of this sacred edifice.—One strong effort at union is all that is wanting to restore the proper respect and attendance at public worship, and let it not be said, that sordid interest or private pique prevented Jews from being united, when we have in truth so much to be thankful for, that we ought to endeavour to deserve a little of the good we enjoy. In many other countries the Hebrew is oppressed and despised; here he is upon an equality with other citizens, and is unmolested in the exercise of his religion. Yet in tyrannical countries the Jew has always been a true believer, and a zealot in his faith even to martyrdom. Let us then prove, that in a free country the Jew is no less zealous, no less animated with love of Heaven, although the rod of persecution no longer compels him to seek shelter from the sword of man under the protection of the Almighty.—For even here we are not raised beyond hope of succour from Him! life is yet heir to thousands of ills, to numerous cares, to manifold vexations and disappointments; and although free and citizens, we cannot expect to combat with these ills successfully without the helping hand of the Supreme Protector! And then, besides being citizens of these free states, we are also members of the Jewish nation, the people chosen by

God as his peculiar treasure; and as such we have to take care, that we do not become commixed with the nations of the earth; for we have a glorious hope of a restoration to a land once our own, under a leader appointed by God to restore peace on earth, to judge with justice, in whose days universal knowledge and universal liberty shall reign.—Farther, we are children of salvation; but this boon every one must earn for himself by virtue and piety, whilst in this probationary life! Then at last we are children of God, to whom as a Parent we owe filial obedience, and humble resignation as our Creator! As such then, as men free and untrammelled by oppression, as Jews, as children of salvation, and creatures of God, let us return to the Lord whom we have forsaken, and seek his forgiveness; so that we may be sealed in the book of everlasting life when the final decree is issued in the heavenly tribunal.

O our Father in heaven! we thank Thee for the manifold blessings we enjoy; for the many mercies which we have undeservingly obtained from thy bounty. Humbly do we acknowledge that it was thy grace which protected us, thy providence which shielded us! We have, O Father, no offerings to bring for all this goodness, save the humble but sincere offering of truly grateful hearts! O shield us farther by thy majesty; guard us henceforward, that we may not stumble; and enlighten our hearts, that we may see how injurious it is to leave thy ways, and how refreshing to live conformably to thy will. Let the light of thy countenance shine unto us while living on earth, and when we depart, O take us under the shadow of thy wings, to stay before thy throne everlastingly, in the brightness of thy omnipotence, in the felicity Thou grantest to thy servants! Amen.

Tishry 4th. } 5593.
Septr. 28th. }

DISCOURSE XXIV.

THE ADVENT OF MESSIAH.

O Lord of the universe! to whom all power appertaineth, bless and protect thy people in their captivity, and guard their dispersions, lest they fall a prey to their enemies, and hasten the time of their reunion on thy holy mountain. Amen!

Brethren!

It is often asserted that we Israelites have no definite ideas of our religious doctrines, that the light of the Bible, although at first given to us, sheds no benignant ray into our minds; in short, it is boldly maintained that we grope in darkness, and are like the untutored infant in the midst of a collection of books, unable to profit by the stores of learning contained in them, because he has as yet not been taught to decipher their meaning. If by this and the like charges it is meant to be conveyed, that we are entirely unable to give as reasonable definitions of our tenets as other denominations: then is the charge utterly false; for we have those among us who, having deeply studied the pages of Sacred Writ, and whose researches having entered deeply into the legacies of divine wisdom, can and do publicly proclaim what are the duties which, as Jews, we owe to God. And can it be said, that the plain and obvious knowledge so richly spread forth in revelation speaks no longer in intelligible terms to our people? who will be bold enough to hazard the assertion, that those promises which, more than two thousand years ago, were held forth to inspire hope into the fainting spirit, to instil confidence into the wavering mind, now no longer breathe the holy inspiration, and the same refreshing invigorating thoughts which are inherent in the oracles of God?—But if we are accused of an indifference to religious instruction; if our adversaries assert that we are not such strict observers of the law as we should be; if we are told, that with the best light we act as though we were in darkness: we must with shame confess the truth of these accusations; for although instruction has been offered to us ever since the promulgation of the law, it is lamentable to see how few profit thereby; how rarely it is that a public teacher will be listened to, how pleasant soever his instruction may be. And then, even if he be listened to, even if the people should come to hear him, how few go away resolved in their minds to profit by the lessons they have heard. Ay, we listen, we acknowledge the justness of the rebuke addressed to our consideration; but we go away from the lecture as bad as we entered the place of worship; and if even a virtuous resolution should have for a moment sprung up in our minds, we endeavour by all means in our power to suppress its incipient working and are wellnigh ashamed, that even for a brief space of time we could find aught blameworthy in our course of life. Nay, we perhaps blame the teacher for his unjust severity in placing cases before us by which we were induced to apply the rules he laid down to ourselves, and upon second thoughts we imagine, that no part of the lecture could be justly applicable to our case; and to be brief, we think, that although others might need instruction and reformation, it is not we who are among the number.—It is owing chiefly to these causes, to an overweening confidence in our virtue, and to an undue notion of our importance and wisdom, that we find so small a share of real religious feeling and a proper respect for teachers of religion among us. Hence it is that the world and its goods are so highly esteemed, and that many, very many, of our people pay but little attention to their immortal happiness. It is true, they see riches snatched away from the gray-headed man, who all his life has been the slave to avarice; they behold the young and rich nursling of pleasure borne to the grave: yet whilst poverty does not reach them, they dream not that penury may be their lot also one day; and whilst they enjoy life and health, they place disease and death at so great a distance, that they appear not worth minding! And if you call their attention to their last day, place before them the horrors of dissolution, you will perhaps be ridiculed as a fanatic, and your best admonitions answered by a laugh of derision!—Am I wrong in my remarks? would to God, that all our people were virtuous and fond of listening to instruction, and let me then be accused of speaking falsely and unjustly severe of them; but whilst the facts are, as I have represented them, I must, if I speak at all, boldly express the truth, and let no one think that this truth is less mortifying to me than it is to any of my hearers; for am I not too an Israelite? and are not the fault and the consequent shame mine as well as others'? But not through flattering ourselves can our moral state be improved, any more than the physician can cure his patient by encouraging him to indulge in those excesses which have deprived him of health.—It was owing to the belief, that all my admonitions were useless, belief do I say? I am wronging myself, to the absolute fact —that my several addresses had failed to draw our population to the house of God, that I had almost resolved never to address you again, believing that you did not wish to hear me speak to you upon religious subjects. Understand me, I do not say, that I ever entertained the idea, that all were unwilling to hear me; for I am well convinced that there are some who always urged me to persevere; neither should any one imagine that it was offended pride, in not receiving hearers enough, which counselled me to desist. No, although not indifferent to the approbation of those capable of judging, yet would I have willingly foregone all praise, would have gladly exposed myself to obloquy and hatred, if by so doing I could have advanced the cause of religion and induced a more regular attendance upon our holy worship!* But failing in this, and discovering that sermons in the language of the country were not universally approved of, I thought that, all things considered, it would be best not to trouble you any more to pay attention to my addresses, which some no doubt may also have thought an innovation in our worship, though in truth, it was first in our Synagogues and schools, as early as the days of the second, and perhaps too of the first temple, that religious instruction was publicly dispensed, and it is from us, that a kindred faith, kindred so far as it rests for its tenets upon our Scriptures, has borrowed the custom. It was in accordance with these views, that I in my last discourse announced, that it might probably be the last; and do not think me inconsistent, that, with some of my views unchanged, I now again address you. No, it was not mortified pride which advised me to desist from my labours; nor is it caprice which induces me to resume them. I do yet, as I before did, doubt my ability to effect any good purpose; but I yield to the opinion of others, who have advised me to continue what I once have begun, and I shall, therefore, from time to time, so it be God's will to preserve me, give you my views on religious matters, as far as I know, or am acquainted with, the tenets of our belief. I do not aim at novelty; but all I shall endeavour to accomplish is, to call your attention to your permanent concerns, which should from their importance claim at least an equal share with your worldly pursuits. Perhaps, I may not see any good arising from my endeavours, before my voice be silenced, my heart be stilled, by death; but there may, nay, I am almost confident there will, arise some one after me, who will be able to follow up with more certain success my humble beginning, and thus, although I may not live to see it here, I shall have in another state the satisfaction not to have striven in vain!—Having said thus much, which I conceived to be due both to you, brethren, and to me, permit me to draw your attention to one of the most important tenets of our belief, to wit, the Advent of the Messiah, and the restoration of the Israelites to their former land.—On this subject we read the following in the *fourth* chapter of Micah:

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* Several paragraphs of a private nature, and more immediately addressed to the congregation of this city with which I was then connected, have been omitted, and the parts retained are published from no other motives, but that the reproof they contain is applicable to the inhabitants of other places as well as our own.

והיה באחרית הימים יהיה הר בית ה׳ נכון בראש
ההרים ונשא הוא מגבעות ונהרו עליו עמים : והלכו
גוים רבים ואמרו לכו ונעלה אל הר ה׳ ואל בית
אלהי יעקב ויורנו מדרכיו ונלכה בארחתיו כי מציון
תצא תורה ודבר ה׳ מירושלם : מיכה ד׳ א׳-ב׳ :

"And it shall come to pass at the end of days, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared above the mountains, and it shall be raised above the hills, and to it shall stream the peoples. And many nations shall go and say, Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob, and He shall teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for (says the prophet) from Zion shall go out the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Micah iv. 1–2.

In Isaiah (see the beginning of the eleventh chapter) we read:

"And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a sprout shall grow out of his roots."—And farther: "They shall not injure, nor shall they destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.—And it shall come to pass on that day, that the Lord will again display his power, to bring in the remnant of his people—

and He will raise up a banner to the nations, and gather the outcasts of Israel; and the dispersions of Judah He will assemble from the four corners of the earth!"

That the passages just cited relate to a time which has not yet been experienced, either by our or any other nation, cannot be denied; and whereas the words of Scripture have either come to pass or will eventually do so, we say, that we have either felt their fulfilment, or that we look forward to their eventual accomplishment. The first is knowledge, the latter is hope; and although we have no ocular evidence by which we can dive into the future, yet we can compare this future with the past, of which we have a record in history, or appeal to our daily experience, which is the present, and consequently to us mortals the best of evidence. Now the question is: "What does past history or present experience teach concerning Scripture-promises? or, in other words, has any thing ever occurred which tended to verify Scripture-predictions, and are there any events now in progress to verify these predictions?"—To these questions we answer, that many predictions contained in the Bible have, in times gone by, seen their fulfilment, and as far as the present period is concerned, we also see the effects of the accomplishment of these events daily perpetuated. Not to multiply examples, let us refer to the admonitions contained in the books of Moses concerning our people.—They were there promised that they should enter the land of Canaan, but that the nature of their tenure should be dependent on an exact obedience to the commandments contained in these books.—The event proved the truth of the prediction. The Israelites entered Palestine and conquered it.—Long they lived within its boundaries, and no nation was able, during some periods of their history, to withstand their power; and yet they were but few in number, living on a narrow margin of the eastern termination of the Mediterranean Sea. What then, we ask, made them so strong? It was the power vouchsafed to them for obedience to the divine will.—Anon they trespassed—they were in truth tired of happiness—and followed the idolatrous course of other nations; again and again were they warned of their threatening danger, and they laughed at the voice of admonition; but the evil nevertheless came over them like a whirlwind, and they were swept from off the surface of their land, and fifty-two years of utter desolation saw not the foot of man or domestic beast treading the deserted highways of ruined Palestine. But seventy years soon elapsed, and at their ending a small number of Jews, now no longer the united Israelites, returned to repossess their land, and again they dwelt therein, but not in that independence and national greatness which had been once theirs. A second time the temple was built, and the smoke of sacrifices was again seen to arise from the sacred altar! But wo! bloodthirstiness and disunion broke out among them, and the land, which should not be defiled by innocent blood, saw it shed in torrents; the brother murdered the brother at the foot of the altar, and in the courts of the temple the aged was slain! The Lord saw it, and his anger was kindled, and thereupon the ruthless foe destroyed all, and passed the plough over thy prostrate ruins, O sacred Jerusalem! He called thy name *Aelia*, he imagined thus to root out thy memory from our mind! But he was deceived, O holy city! residence of the Most High! and even desolate as thou yet art, thou hast seen that tyrant's empire subverted by hordes of unheard of barbarians, whilst thou art, even in ruins, the holy place of many nations! In this manner was the prediction of our downfal accomplished; and what is more remarkable still is that, despite of this entire subversion of our state, our nation has not ceased to exist. Whatever interdicting our worship, slaughtering, burning, and torturing our people could accomplish, has been tried by heathens, Nazarenes and Mahomedans; but yet all their toiling has been of no avail; for we have been promised, that even in the land of our enemies we should not be utterly forsaken, as there too the Lord would still continue to be our Protector and our Father! It is due to this *promised* supreme protection, not to any inherent obstinacy of our race, that we have hitherto continued a nation, undivided and unbroken, although dispersed over all lands before the Lord. If then any one asks for a verification of Scriptural promises, we can point to our past history, and to our present experience; and if even we cannot convince the unbeliever of the absolute certainty of our hope, we believing Israelites have enough to uphold us in our faith under whatever sufferings it may please the Almighty to afflict us with.

Having premised thus much, we will now consider the promised future as absolutely certain and inevitable, as it is the decree and emanation of the same unending Being who before has promised, and fulfilled to the letter the promises He had made.—The future then, to which we confidently look, because it has been predicted, is the change which the prophets have announced as sure to come over the nature of things in the social organization of mankind.—A time will come, when the Lord will raise up a Branch from the root of Jesse, who shall be the ruler of the Israelites, and in whose days universal peace and universal knowledge shall reign.—This prince, so raised up by the special interposition of God's providence, shall be endowed with the spirit of prophecy, and be as good as he shall be wise. To him justice shall be as it were a girdle, and truth a belt, that is to say, strict and impartial justice shall be administered by him; since the wisdom which shall rest upon him is to be the special gift of Heaven, and therefore he will be incapable of erring. Besides this, peace shall be every where prevailing, and no nation will practise any longer the destructive arts of war; because the desire for aggrandizement and oppression, as well as the power of executing injustice, shall be removed.—Independently of all this, the outward and temporal tranquillity will be more than overbalanced by the spiritual renovation which is to take place. "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord," says the prophet, the law of the Most High will then indeed become the beacon-light to all nations; and thus many nations shall say: "Let us go to the house of the God of Jacob, and He shall teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths." And what shall happen to the people of Israel who have so long and so patiently endured all the contumely and the oppression for the sake of the holy and venerated law? They shall be gathered from amidst all the nations where they have been dispersed, and they shall be brought back to the land which God promised to Abraham, when He made with him the covenant to give to him and to his descendants the land comprised between the Euphrates and the river of Egypt, a land which shall then be fruitful in the extreme, where famine shall be unknown, and where no wild beast nor poisonous reptile shall injure or destroy! And the temple at Jerusalem? it shall be rebuilt in more than its former splendour, and the walls then reared shall endure uninjured and unapproached by any foreign invader; for the Lord will be around them like a wall of fire!—Envy moreover shall be banished, and the divisions and quarrels, which caused twice our banishment, shall be no more heard of; for the reason that oppression both internal and external must have ceased, when the anointed king, the Messiah of the Lord, shall reign on earth! —The foregoing is a summary of the many coinciding prophecies to be found in the Bible, and it will be seen, that the reign of the Messiah is to be one of good-will to all men.—It would be out of place in a discourse to mix controversial matters, and to recite the opinions entertained by others respecting the prophecies cited above. To prove the correctness of our ideas were easily possible; but neither is this the place nor would it answer any good purpose to do so now. Enough, that our hopes are founded upon the evident and literal interpretation of the biblical text, and any other explanation is unworthy of the sacred oracles, where, if we but knew the exact meaning of the words, and if we were but certain to what the prophets alluded, when they spoke to a nation having a community of feelings and a peculiar mode of expression, we should never be at a loss to agree about the import of any sentence. But unfortunately, much has been lost in the lapse of so many centuries, and among so many and multifarious sufferings.—Still much, nay, the greater part, is yet very evident, and where this is the case, where the words employed by the Bible are yet well understood, where the imagery employed requires no extraneous elucidation: there, even at this distance of time and place, we need not seek for any interpretation, save what the words employed convey.—And the passages relating to the Messiah are for the most part of this obvious and self-evident nature; and as the promises there made have as yet not been literally fulfilled, we say, that their accomplishment is yet to take place. Some one may ask: "By what means are we to distinguish the Messiah? how are we to ascertain that he is of the descendants of David, since the division of families rests no longer upon a sure foundation?"—To these and similar objections we reply: that, whenever the true Messiah shall appear, he will bring such evidences of his mission, that his truth will not be doubted; he will not come to be rejected, he will not come to be persecuted and executed like a malefactor; no, he is to be the prince of Israel; the shepherd David of God's people; the righteous judge of the oppressed, and the arbiter of formerly contending nations. How he will verify his mission is not for us to inquire; but enough we know to say, that whenever he appears, his mission will be universally acknowledged, and his rule every where submitted to!—"When is the appointed time!" to this question we have to answer, that nowhere in the prophets is this declared with distinctness; on the contrary, such terms, as, At the end of days; at the time of the end; at the true end, are employed, to convey us an indefinite idea of the time of the advent. We then are in constant hope of the arrival of the period of universal peace and universal knowledge, and thus we have always before us the strongest incentive to virtue and repentance; for upon a sincere return to the Lord, we are taught, depends the acceleration of the time of the arrival of the Anointed.—But if we will not repent, we retard our and the world's happiness till the time which Providence has set as the limit, beyond which the regeneration will not be delayed; and when it will be proved to all, that it was God who had afflicted Israel for their transgressions, and that it was for their sins that He suffered them to linger so long in almost hopeless captivity. And then it will be seen, that God alone is King and Ruler of the universe, when He will return to Zion in glory, and for everlasting dwell in his temple at Jerusalem!

O Father of mercy! behold us now suffering and dispersed, a scorn and derision to the nations! How long, O King! shall thy people mourn? how long shall they suffer the effects of thy anger? O guide and redeem them in thy unbounded grace; and plant them in the land of Israel, and be their King and Protector, as Thou hast spoken through thy prophets. Amen!

Kislev 14th. } 5593.
Decebr. 6th. }

Note.—The subject of Messiah will be found treated more in detail, at the end of the second volume.

DISCOURSE XXV.

THE INSTITUTION OF SACRIFICES.

O Thou, who art exalted above all existing beings,—to whom the whole that is, is as nothing,—but who receivest in grace the acts of worship of the works of thy hands, receive us in favour when we approach Thee with prayer; and accept our humble offering, when we devote our hearts, and souls, and our possessions to thy will! Amen!

Brethren!

When we survey the events of life, and investigate seriously the chain of circumstances which occurred since we entered into being: we will be struck with the remarkable fact, that amidst all our toiling we have rarely been able to accomplish any thing very remarkable, either for its wisdom or greatness. It is not, that some of us may not be as wise or as good as those who have succeeded in doing mankind essential service, and who have raised to themselves, what we would call, lasting monuments of greatness; but solely because no opportunity for display has offered itself to us.—Man, in fact, to distinguish himself, requires that the materials of greatness (if I may use the expression) should be laid abundantly within his reach, and all that the greatest master-mind is capable of doing is to fashion the materials thus given into something, by which either he or others may be aggrandized or benefitted. But then, again, he cannot work by himself; for, give a man ever so many opportunities, he cannot do much unless aided by others; since life is so short and health so uncertain, that nearly every undertaking must be left unfinished, if many do not work simultaneously upon the same plan of action. If it were necessary, it would be easily possible to prove this by the most isolated acts of greatness, accomplished by the greatest of mortals; but its evident truth, as a general rule, will obviate the necessity.—I speak not, however, of virtuous actions, of deeds of faith, but only of worldly affairs, where a man is not so much an individual, as a part of a general system, or in other words a member of society.—It is in the latter capacity that he must fail of distinguishing himself, if he has not the opportunity given by being raised above the level of his fellows; since otherwise his acts will all be confined to himself, or his immediate connexions, and therefore apparently inoperative upon the general mass without.—Great acts, therefore, being difficult of accomplishment, and what is more, not being always useful: it would seem to follow, that it is inexpedient to be striving for their attainment. And in truth, as a general rule, it would be best that no attention whatever should be paid towards attempting great things; for it is through these attempts, whether successful or unsuccessful, whether good or bad, that so much evil has been entailed upon mankind.—Besides, if only the truly virtuous and highly gifted were to undertake this task, but very little evil, comparatively speaking, would be the consequence; but the misfortune is, that so many bad and interested men scramble for greatness and notoriety, that hardly any thing but positive evil is the general consequence of the almost universal desire for distinction.

It is this knowledge of the utter inefficiency of all our best endeavours, which induced our wise men in many instances to counsel their hearers: "Try to keep thyself distant from earthly greatness;" or, "He who pursues honour, will not attain her; she will fly from him."—"If then, we are not to be ambitious," some one will ask, "what should be the aim of our life?" The answer is: If it were that we ourselves were perfect and unimprovable, our life would indeed be spent in uselessness, unless we attended to actions connected with the world without; but, since we must, with the smallest share of penetration, discover, that we have always an object of attention within ourselves: we shall, if we set a proper value upon our improvement, have enough to do for the entire brief space of time which we are permitted to sojourn in this state of existence. And in the attention which we thus pay to ourselves, we may rest assured that we adopt the best means of improving ourselves and benefitting others; for if we weigh every act and thought we shall seldom, if we have correct knowledge, be led into error, and the nature of truth is so organized, that benefit and instruction must flow out of its contemplation as well as practice.—And because life's best efforts ought, according to the foregoing exposition, to be directed to details more than to entire systems of action, it is that we have in our religion, revealed to us and to the world for our guidance and instruction, so many particular precepts, relating to the various stages of *private* life especially. It was the object of our Father to educate, so to say, his children, that they might become worthy members of his family, and fit to inhabit the universal palace which He has opened for all the living, without distinguishing whether they be Israelites or gentiles, whether rich or poor, whether wise or foolish, whether powerful and exalted, or oppressed and humble. For in God's mansion the doors are always open, the entrance is only closed to the undeserving; since the price of admission to its pleasures is a virtuous life, according to the best endeavours, guided by the best knowledge a man may have received of his duties; and of him who has received much light, much virtue, according to his means, will be asked; and of the less instructed and less gifted less will be required.—It is, therefore, in the many small and apparently unimportant precepts which our law contains, that we discover the great wisdom of its institution; since the great acts of life are unattainable by most, but the minor observances of religion are within the reach of all.

But unfortunately, although we have so many ways to make our Father graciously pleased with our conduct, too many hours pass away, even in the life of the best, without an especial regard to the holy dictates of religion; too much time is spent in worldly occupations; too much leisure is devoted to foolish amusements, so that with many the idea of self-improvement is hardly ever entertained. Again, success in life very often calls forth all the latent germs of pride and self-sufficiency, places before its victim the greatest notion of his own greatness, and excludes all thoughts of superiority elsewhere even in his Maker.

And escapes from dangers, too, are then but another incentive to vaunting, as though success in one's undertakings and escapes from difficulties are the fruits and the necessary consequences of human foresight and of a mortal's exertions!—And if a man has those ideas of pride and obstinacy once engrafted on his mind, he will step carelessly, as it were, over the course of life, and heedless of false paths, will hurry on to the goal of his existence, regardless if he has missed the aim of his being here or not.—The reason is obvious. He has confidence in his good intentions and prudence, and as he regards not what others say or think, he must remain unimproved or perhaps retrograde, hourly, from the point of eminence he may have attained; and every one at last must discover, that the man, whom during the brilliancy of a successful career we were apt to esteem as wise and superior, has ultimately left us no reason to desire, that we might be like him. For though his actions may have savoured of earthly wisdom, and apparently gilded his very words with a specious reasonableness: we will, upon closer investigation, discover, that he has been the prey of ambition, and been tormented by insatiable desires at those very moments, when his outward appearance denoted nothing but calmness to the casual beholder.—But religion was bestowed upon us, that we might watch ourselves; and besides that we should endeavour to be free from the blame of the wise and the good, we should also be able to hold up the mirror of God, his holy law, to our own souls, and thereby discover, if it be all right within, if all our deeds can be as well defended upon true and solid grounds, as they may seem right to others. The oftener now we institute this inquiry, the oftener we take this view into our natures, the more capable we must be, of necessity, to discover the errors we may have committed, and rectify them.—Now the greatest instruments we have to accomplish this change in our sentiments, are regret and gratitude; for the former will teach us, that there is something unworthy in offending; and the latter, that benefits received demand some return on our part. It is to these considerations, that we can refer the entire system and arrangement of the sacrifices, which we were commanded to bring to the temple of God on certain occasions.—We read in Leviticus v. 5:

והיה כי יאשם לאחת מאלה והתודה אשר חטא
עליה והביא את אשמו לה׳ על חטאתו אשר חטא :
ויקרא ה׳ ה׳ :

"And it shall come to pass, if he have incurred guilt by any one of these things, that he shall confess the sin he hath done; and bring his trespass offering to the Lord for the sin he hath committed."

In this announcement of the institution of the offering for guilt, we are also, at once, shown the object of the ordinance. "And he shall confess the sin he hath done;" not with careless inattention shall man present himself before the altar—not with an outward present, but inward obstinacy dare he approach;—no; the first step is, he must confess his sins! Not before a man is he to relate the category of his misdeeds; not clothed in sackcloth (although both may be at times useful, when one is done to obtain advice, and the other to promote contrition)—needs he to exhibit his feelings before the eyes of men as fallible as himself; but before his God he shall pour out his heart, to the Almighty he must tell what the greatness of his evil has been; for to Him he cannot offer extenuations of his conduct, nor can he endeavour to conceal the smallest minutia even of all his thoughts. Having thus fortified himself in *regret*, he shall bring his offering, an animal free from fault, a bird, or even a handful of flour, if this be all his means can afford, to the priest, and have it sacrificed according to the dictates of the law in atonement for the wrong he has done.—Let us for a moment advert to the solemnity of the occasion. A sinner's own reflections, or the admonitions of his fellow-beings, have awakened in him a consciousness of the wrong with which he has burdened his soul. Remorse seizes him;—day and night he is agitated by the consciousness of the nothingness of his imagined exalted station;—and the rest that is denied him, when he reflects upon the oppression which the labourer, the orphan, the widow, and the stranger have received at his guilty hands, he now seeks to find in the religion which he has hitherto neglected. He reads the Word, and he is told, that confession, restitution, and amendment are the means of forgiveness; and behold him then pouring out his anguished spirit in sincere prayer; again he visits the humble roof of the labourer, and gives him the wages which he has unlawfully detained from him; he shares the riches which he enjoys with the widow and the orphan whom he has oppressed, and thus prepared, he leads to the courts of God his trespass-offering. Again, the fire is kindled upon the altar; the offerer lays his hand upon the head of the victim, and while its blood is spilt, he imagines: "Thus did I deserve to die for my crimes; but the Merciful One has given me an opportunity to regain the happiness I have lost by means of the sacrifice which He receives at my hands." The song is chaunted by the singers of the temple, the priest arranges the fat upon the altar, and the multitude rejoice at the return of another member to the fraternity of the pious; but this is nothing compared to the new affection for himself, his God, and the law awakened in the mind of the offerer, who with a holy zeal newly rekindled, with love for mankind again revived in him, now returns home, a more cheerful and more contented man, a new blessing to his children and an example for others to do likewise, and regain like him the happiness which their mad folly has snatched from their grasp.

If regret can have this beneficial influence upon man, the other principle, which has been mentioned, *gratitude*, can and should have a similar effect.—Man has tilled the field, and intrusted his seed to the fertile bosom of the earth. He has completed his share of the task for producing the bread which is to nourish him. But what is his labour, if the Lord sendeth not the rain and the dew to fertilize the ground? Or, if this blessing should come down too abundantly, where is the husbandman to obtain the blessed light of the sun to ripen his fruit? But it is our Protector in heaven, who tempers sunshine with rain, and thereby bestows sustenance on the expecting children of man; for through his means the fields are clothed with verdure—through his blessing the grain is filled with nutritious matter—and by his provident care the animals of the field are clothed with fatness.—The labourer seeing all his endeavours blessed, with a cheerful heart follows the richly loaded wagons that bear home the abundance of food which he is enabled to lay up for the winter's store; and having finished his annual task, he cannot help reflecting how much he owes to God, how utterly useless would his toil have been, if his humble means had not been assisted from a Superior Source.—The festivals of the Lord approach, and they who fear Him hasten to the temple, and there bring their peace-offerings—offered through the exuberance of grateful feelings which animate them: and one excites the other to deserve henceforward, yet oftener, and still greater benefits from the Giver of all good!

Led by love for riches, or the desire to see foreign lands, behold the adventurous youth traversing pathless deserts, and braving the dangers of the waterless wilderness. In the midst of thirst and hunger, nothing but destruction seems to await him, and even the hope of God's assistance is almost wrenched from him by silent despair. But lo! amidst desolation the mercy of the Almighty is displayed, and the exhausted traveller reaches his own loved home; and publicly he now declares the mercy which has been vouchsafed him; he brings his sacrifice of thanksgiving to the temple, and whilst narrating to the assembled guests the unmerited favours he has received, he resolves to be for the future more obedient to the precepts of God, which are more refreshing to the afflicted soul, than the spring of pure water in the wilderness is to the tongue of fainting man.—He also, who had been thrown on the bed of sickness; and he, who had languished in prison, separated for his crimes, or by the malice of enemies from his kindred and friends; as also he, who had seen the glories of the Creator displayed upon the vast and mighty ocean,—all in fact, who had been snatched from imminent danger, were bound to bring, in acknowledgment of their debt of gratitude, a present to the sanctuary of God, and publicly declare the goodness which had been bestowed on them.—These, briefly, were the objects of the sacrifices. They were not intended to induce people to get rid of their sins by killing a guiltless animal; no such senseless idea lay at the foundation of this part of the law. As I have said: for sins committed unwittingly and heedlessly, for violence done to the property of another, which could not be considered as theft, the sin and trespass-offerings were instituted; but sincere repentance and reparation of the evil done were imperatively demanded before the sacrifice could be received. Of the offerings dictated by gratitude nothing more need be said in illustration than has been mentioned already, since their good tendency must be apparent to any one that thinks seriously.—That bloody sacrifices are expedient cannot be denied; for since we are permitted to, and daily do, make use of animals for food, is it not entirely consonant with reason to devote them also to the service of Heaven, at the same time, that we make use of them for ourselves? And as has been said already, it was not the mere sacrifice, but the idea which accompanied it, which could render it, according to our law, an acceptable offering.—But, brethren, since the temple has been laid waste by our adversaries, the sacrifices have ceased, for only on the site of the temple can they be brought; no longer the consecrated priest administers the burnt-offerings, and the song of the Levite is hushed in the ruined halls of the holy house.—But let it not be said that, because the outward symbols have ceased to be, regret and gratitude have no longer their full influence on our hearts! No, let us, each and all, demonstrate by the careful attention we pay to our conduct that we feel poignant sorrow when we have transgressed; and that for every act of grace we are grateful; and that we are fearful of offending and ready to obey our everkind Father. If thus we are animated, our life, be it ever so humble, must be a series of blessings to ourselves, and to all around us; and if we then even occasionally transgress (since no man is perfect) we are assured, that the forgiveness which we crave will not be denied to our prayers.—And if, then, no distinction await us on earth—if the selfish of the world will not listen to our advice—if even we see the wicked lord it as masters: we should submit to this dispensation with patience and cheerfulness, and reflect that this life is not the entire time which our immortal soul is destined to endure.—And then again, if we but reflect, how short a space man can enjoy all sublunary good—how many times the greatest earthly pleasures are interrupted by sorrow—and how little security there is in their possession—and besides how soon the man, who is praised to-day by the public, is despised and sunk in oblivion—and how futile all fame is: we must be easily reconciled to the humble lot, which we, in common with the immense number of those unknown to fame and riches, have received as our sphere of action. For the time will come, when the glory of the great must vanish—when the wisdom of the wise will cease—when the power of rulers will be broken,—when they, together with their humblest menials, must all appear before the impartial Judge, before whom neither glory, nor wisdom, nor power will be taken as an excuse for righteousness outraged or virtue slighted; and where the beggar will be preferred, provided his life has been virtuous and useful, according to his means.—Let it be therefore our constant study, to train our hearts to obedience, and let us never neglect to listen to the holy monitors, which God has planted within us—regret and gratitude. For if we listen to their admonition, and offer a contrite spirit to our Maker, we may rest assured, that our sins will be forgiven, and that we shall be graciously received by Him, who promised through his prophet, that the time shall come, when the offering of Judah and Jerusalem shall be as acceptable to Him as in times of old. May this be his will, and may our eyes speedily see the accomplishment. Amen.

Nissan 8th. } 5593.
March 28th. }

DISCOURSE XXVI.

THE SINFULNESS OF PRIDE.

O God of everlasting! teach us thy ways and fill our hearts with knowledge of Thee and thy wonderful works; so that adoration of Thee may flow from the consciousness in us of thy might and wisdom. Amen.

Brethren!

You must have been often struck with the remarkable fact, that persons who to all appearance have the same opportunity of forming an opinion, will take views entirely varying of the same subject; and that others, apparently possessed of the same talents, have acquired tastes so very differing, and pursue at times such opposite and contradictory lines of conduct, as almost to baffle and surprise you. But upon a closer investigation of the springs of action, we shall discover the reason of the first mentioned case to be, that those who are to form a judgment have not been all taught alike, and do not possess the same degree of information; and of the second, that those equally endowed with reasoning powers do not regard things from the same point of view; and consequently seeing, as it were, the moral world from different positions, they each form a different idea of the objects placed within their intellectual horizon. This also will account for the difference discoverable in the degrees of moral improvement or piety, which we meet with amongst the children of man. If all were equally well informed, and if all would give their mind the same direction, there would be a perfect unanimity of opinion amongst all men. There would then be no different sects, and every member of the universal religion would act as the most distant from him in time or space could do. Because, since actions are in sound minds the results of thought, and since thought is the effect of information: all consequences of thought or information would in this case be the same, since the source of them would then be of equal extent and equal usefulness in all thinking beings; that is to say, men would all be virtuous alike, because they would then be acting from an equal degree of knowledge, and from an application of this knowledge to the same purposes.—Now, although it is true that the thoughts of men cannot be seen, still, as their effects are visible, we can determine almost to a certainty the current of ideas in most persons; for, since *actions* are bad or good, useful or injurious, we may safely conclude, that the thoughts of the agents are also of the same nature; and consequently that those who act well are governed by good thoughts, and the doers of evil are moved by a bad train of thinking.

This view brings us at once to the conviction, that, if we wish to cultivate the duties of religion, it is of the utmost importance to us to know which train of thought is the promoter of religious conduct, and which is calculated to abstract us from a pious life.

Let me premise that all reflections arising within ourselves, and admonitions addressed to us by others, although they may at first sight appear to conduce to what is commonly termed moral improvement only, may be properly considered as belonging to practical religious instruction: if their tendency is to improve the mind, and to fertilize it for the reception of the seed, which is to be derived in the best manner and as the only source from the oracles of God themselves, when we have been aided by correct information and careful attentive study. Lectures and addresses from even the most brilliantly endowed speakers are therefore perfectly useless, if their hearers are not in sympathy with them through previous knowledge of religion, or if they merely flatter human pride, and exalt a mortal's self-sufficiency. But to become truly the means of improving the public morals, they should be calculated to convey general religious impressions and be chiefly directed to remove all kinds of objections to our holy religion, with which impiety and ignorance may endeavour to entrap the unwary, or which self-interest or passion may frame as excuses to lull a disturbed conscience into security. To say something very surprising, or to advance new ideas on a subject like our immutable religion, would be evidently improper, even if it were possible; since any thing not before heard of, or not previously acquiesced in, must be an innovation attempted to be engrafted on the rule of faith, and which would at once stamp doctrines thus advanced with the seal of falsehood. On the other hand to treat of ceremonies and laws in a lecture, which is to be heard but once, can also have no very beneficial tendency; since nothing is easier, than that the hearers may not understand very accurately the instructions of the speaker, or may recollect them but imperfectly.—All, therefore, which remains properly as the province of oral and public instruction, is to endeavour by rational and clear expositions of the nature of religion to call the attention of the hearers to the subject, and to answer those objections which a person may have made himself or heard made by others, or even those which may never have yet been urged; and lastly, to place in a clear light the great and overwhelming reasonableness which the law has beyond any emanations of a mortal's wisdom, and thus to induce others to study with more diligence, and with a mind better prepared for such a study, the Scriptures of the Lord. It is not, believe me, brethren, as much from ignorance that we sin, although we may at times flatter our vanity with so silly an excuse, as from want of proper training. It is true, we may not know every particular iota of religious duties; it may be that we are not fully aware of the extent of the sacrifices demanded of us; but we may, nevertheless, avoid even in these instances doing unconsciously wrong, if we keep within the limits of what is allowed us, and not assume for ourselves too much liberty of range in departing from what many of us may perhaps think the too minute observances of the ignorant and superstitious of a former age. We should be careful not to disregard all, because we cannot respect all; and upon the whole, rather mistrust our judgment than our information, and rather do many an unimportant action, than, by too great stickling to know the *reason for all*, omit doing that which may be very important, although we may not so conceive it.

With these general remarks prefaced, let us recur to the subject which I first introduced for this day's reflection.—I said, that it is absolutely necessary for the religious man to have a good train of thoughts and feelings as the basis of his actions; for without this first requisite, virtue is but another name for hypocrisy, and piety but the cloak of wickedness.—On this subject, as well as on every other connected with our moral improvement, we find wholesome advice in the holy Scriptures, and upon referring to them, we will at all times find the best guide we can desire to lead us through life.—Now, of all the good habits which are commended in the Bible, meekness is the most prominent, and pride, on the other hand, is always held up as that species of feeling we should above all endeavour to avoid.—We read in the book of Proverbs xvi. 4:

תועבת ה׳ כל גבה לב ׃ משלי יו׳ ד׳ :

"Every one proud of heart is an abomination of the Lord."

If then, we wish not to deserve the displeasure of our God, we should strive to eradicate this enemy of our improvement, this pride, from our hearts, and never suffer it to obtain dominion over our feelings or to influence our actions.—"But why is pride so destructive? why is religion incompatible with arrogance!"—We answer: When God created men, He ordained for them the same origin and the same felicity. It was through sin that they forfeited this felicity, and then a uniform termination of life, or death of the body, was decreed against all descendants of the first sinners.—In thus far, then, no man has a right to assume any superiority over another; and humility, which is the proper knowledge of one's self, will lead its possessor to regard all men as brothers, who are, if even dependent upon him, nevertheless, of the same beginning, and a similar ending. But pride will induce a man to forget that his beginning is the same with that of the most degraded, and that the same fate awaits him, which is appointed for all the descendants of Adam. Let us now rapidly follow the proud man through his career, and see what this forgetfulness will lead to.—In childhood, alas! pride often shows itself already, and the infant, corrupted by flattery, will spurn the caresses of his nurse as though the touch of her, by whose care his life has perhaps been prolonged, were contamination to him, one, who is descended from a noble line of ancestry, noble perhaps in their being distinguished for the perseverance with which they indulged in foolish pleasures, and their subserviency to unjust power. Ridiculous as the exhibition of pride is at so early an age, and obvious as the folly thereof is to every beholder: children are too often countenanced by their parents in such a line of conduct, for they encourage very often, rather than check this early growth of presumption.—In boyhood the seeds of pride continue to produce their legitimate fruit, and the once petulant child shows all the perverseness of the overbearing boy; and the advice of the teacher is received with a frown; his instruction is regarded as the proper appendage of the pedagogue, which the noble and rich scholar need not acquire; and thus the ideas of self-sufficiency, early imbibed, are still stronger confirmed, and the boy attains the age of youth with a heart scoffing at all that are imagined inferior to the greatness of this proud stripling, and with a mind not sufficiently, or perhaps altogether unprepared to contend with the temptations which beset the path of life. He now seeks the gayeties and amusements which he conceives to be the proper province of his exalted rank; habit has already taught him to regard wealth and fictitious greatness as the chief glories of life; and he, therefore, now utterly abhors those whose means or opportunities allow them not to partake of the same enjoyments; and he will hate those who may be above him in those accomplishments, trifling elegancies, and wealth which he so much adores.—He now seeks to outstrip all in the search of refined fooleries, he stops short at no obstacles, and he toils and watches in *these* endeavours much more than the philanthropist in *his* exertions.—Vice too will be courted, provided it can bring the perpetrator a name of a dashing, bold fellow; and the greater the extravagance, and yea, the greater the meanness of the deed, the greater will he conceive to be the glory he has earned by his labours. All this time admonition dares not to be addressed to his sensitive ears; he is too wise in his own conceit, too much trusting to his own wild judgment. And if even something of that careless generosity, which men of pleasure sometimes possess, should occasionally be displayed, some heroic devotion to the interest of mankind, some bold exposure to danger to save the life of a perishing fellow-being: we should, nevertheless, not imagine that the exhibitions of these occasional virtues are the signs of a reformation or legitimate fruits of the system our proud voluptuary pursues. Neither is the case. But the most depraved has a human heart, his soul is of the same pure origin as that of the most pious, and no course of vice can ever entirely destroy the sacred principle of righteousness; and thus a man, like the one we are speaking of, may be radically bad, and yet practise at times acts of great devotion to the interests of suffering mankind, without reforming, and despite of his otherwise wicked course.—Besides, occasional goodness will give a farther zest to pleasures, which will be the more enjoyed, because of a temporary interruption.—But pleasure, as the sole pursuit of any one but little removed above the idiot, must sooner or later become intolerable; and the proud devotee of worldly enjoyment, therefore, will occasionally seek some other occupation. Suppose him now in a high office, see him honoured by his country on account of the influence which his wealth and rank naturally confer upon him; and assume again, which is highly probable, that his occupation has been changed without any improvement in the unhealthy state of his neglected mind. He is merged in multifarious employments, and to his heart's delight he can tyrannize over some others besides his own personal dependants. They who have to ask favours of the official are received with haughty scorn; and wo to those who have not carefully studied his disposition, if upon him should depend their success or failure. He will endeavour to crush those who have not sufficiently valued his importance; and the greater the misfortune he can cause, the greater will be his delight, particularly if moroseness and disappointment should have followed in the wake of the indulgencies of pleasure, and the acquisition of power.—Or place him at the head of national affairs, and uncontrolled by the will of others;

how terrible will then be the effects of pride, and how soon will misery follow the train of the tyrant, who may conceive his dignity injured by the insolence of any of his subjects! You must admit him to be the best musician, the best gladiator, or the best of horse-racers, or your life is in danger; you must yield your paternal inheritance to swell his pleasure-gardens, or else death awaits you; and if you even should commit the offence beyond the limits of his dominions, he will hire the assassin's steel to remove the hated object from the earth. No entreaty, no reasonable exposition of the madness of such proceedings can convince one so much raised in his own conceit above the opinion of others; and not till a natural death stares him in the face, or till perhaps he receives a fatal blow from the dagger of some wretch rendered desperate by oppression, will the tyrant be led to a consciousness of his folly, which might have been done a thousand times, if he had not been blinded by pride.—If it be urged that examples like the foregoing are too rare, and too remote for the attainment of persons in the ordinary circumstances of life: it would nevertheless be perfectly just to exhibit the natural consequences of a passion, which, when carried out to its full extent, can lead to such deplorable results. But we need not go so far, since unfortunately the evil effects of pride are too abundant in all relations of our earthly existence. Many a man has been devoted to a righteous life, while he toils from day to day to obtain food for himself and his family. A sudden, or even gradual, change of circumstances places him in a more elevated situation; wealth pours into his coffers, and he sees himself respected for the sake of his riches by those whom he at one time conceived so much above him. He is pleased with himself, and he says: "My industry, my ingenuity, and my prudence, have caused all this;" and in consequence of this favourable judgment of his own powers he begins to despise his former associates, and learns by degrees to forget his formerly entertained opinions. He is ashamed of his family connexions, they are now too humble to be acknowledged by him; and his new-born importance seeks other objects of action than deeds of piety. For why should he, the wise, the rich, the great, abide by those rules which the foolish, the poor, the humble follow? At first he begins by omitting minor observances, but ultimately the chief commandments, too, find no longer obedience with him, and he appears to one who knew him in poverty, as an entirely changed man. And what has changed him? what has caused him to forget his old friends? what has induced him to forsake his God? It is not the acquisition of riches, but the counsel of overweening pride which has caused all this.—Another man has been used to riches, ease, and affluence; but as all earthly things are changeable, so he too meets with a change in his circumstances, and the wealth, which he thought too great to be dissipated by any event whatever, takes wing, as it were, and leaves him in penury. He had always, whilst rich, thought himself above the working classes, of a somewhat superior clay to those who toil for a living; and shall he descend to their level? no, he cannot do this; idleness will not support him, so he resorts to beggary, swindling, and perhaps highway robbery; and when confined at last in a dungeon for his trespasses, he mourns over the weakness which he would not conquer, and which prevented him from being a hard-working but honest member of society.

Another, again, has descended into the depth of learning, he has searched into the mysteries of creation, has ascended in his imagination to the pinnacles of the starry heaven, and his researches have been admired by friends and strangers. No longer can he, who once moralized over the ambition of mankind and ridiculed their vain pursuits, resist the allurements of pride; he finds in himself a soul of nobler materials, and the admiration which is bestowed on him he conceives to be but a poor return for the great benefits which his discoveries have conferred on the world. He forgets his mortality; he strives to establish a system of morals of his own; he no longer needs the law of Moses to guide *him* who is so much wiser than the great king of Israel; and the support of revelation being once taken from under his feet, he tumbles headlong into the abyss of ruin, and in sudden leaps he hastens down to the gulf of destruction, and herds there with the foolish and the proud of all classes, a warning monument of the weakness of unsupported human intellect, and the unsubstantiality of a mortal's greatness; and when his eye catches a glimpse of death, he perhaps then feels the full effects of a wise man's folly; he calls upon a mortal to prolong his life, he will not believe that he must at length perish, and leave his name behind him as a curse and byword, and his memory to be despised by those whom his sophistry dragged along with him into the stream of unbelief and perdition.—Therefore, says the Bible: "Every one proud of heart is an abomination to the Lord." And no matter how pride is exhibited, if it be by the king on his throne or the lazy mendicant in the street, it is alike an abomination. And if a man but reflects on the great glory of God, on his omnipotent power, on his all-searching wisdom: he must become ashamed at setting up for himself claims of superior excellence. Whatever of greatness, ease, and wisdom is vouchsafed to us, is a gift, or rather a loan, to be demanded back at the pleasure of God. For our greatness at its very acme is often rendered to naught; our ease may be momentarily disturbed by pain; and the very excess of wisdom may produce aberration of intellect. And God has given us in the Bible so many instances of the punishment of the arrogant, and besides, daily experience teaches us the lessons of Scripture over and over again, that nothing but wilful blindness can prevent us from benefitting by those lessons. The Bible speaks of a Pharaoh and of a Sanherib, kings, who in their might almost thought themselves gods and unconquerable; but one was drowned in the Red Sea, and the other returned, from an attempted conquest, a fugitive to his own land.—Then we have the example of a Haman, who for the sake of offended pride strove to exterminate the descendants of Jacob; and a Korah, who wanted to supplant the righteous Moses; but one was removed by a supernatural punishment; the other expired on the gibbet, which he had prepared for the innocent Mordecai! Then we read of the proud Nabal, who in private life was ungrateful from pride; and God removed him, so as not to be a stumbling-block to others. But what needs it to multiply examples to prove both the dangerous tendencies and the terrible consequences of pride and arrogance?—Parents, therefore, you who would delight in the welfare of your children, as you value their peace and yours, watch with the utmost solicitude the early approach of this vice. Check it as soon as it manifests itself; and by your encouraging the humble and lowly to enter your dwellings on terms of ease and good fellowship, if they are good and deserving, teach them early, that those not as much favoured with worldly gifts as you are nevertheless of the same class of beings, and deserving of the same regard as the wealthy.—Above all, allow them never to tyrannize over domestics; for a small beginning though it may be, it may have a terrible ending.—Youths and maidens, you who have just entered life's busy scenes, beware of the snare that lies hidden at your feet. If you feel your station as something so very delightful, and your society as something superior to others: check at once the presumption which is almost sure to follow such ideas, and oh, believe not that the garment makes the man, or that fashionable pursuits exalt you above him who has no time to devote to such employments!—Husbands and wives, ye too must guard your hearts! If success has crowned your exertions, if your children grow up around you in health and beauty, imagine not that your exertions were anything else than the means in the hands of God to bestow blessings upon you. Humble, therefore, your hearts to the Giver of all, that He may continue to you his goodness, and instruct your children to revere Him, the Father of all!—And thou too, man of learning, bend thy ear to the admonition of God! Thou hast received wisdom above thy fellow-men, much more has been made known to thee than to others; strive therefore too to glorify the name of thy Benefactor; instruct the ignorant in his law, and lead all to adore our God, who has made all with so much wisdom!—If, brethren, we always think in this manner, if we constantly guard the avenues of our heart against the approach of pride: we may rest assured that we shall not soon be led into the snares of sin; for when we humbly seek to know God and his ways, we must naturally be watchful over our conduct; and if we be rich then, we will bear our fortune with humility; and if poor, we will cheerfully follow those pursuits by which we can maintain an honest name, without in the first case being buoyed up by arrogance, or in the other checked by useless pride.—And what lovely fruits must the law of God bear in the heart thus cultivated, and how sweet will the harvest be when the labour of life has terminated! "The humble shall inherit the land," says the Lord, and to those who look upon themselves and all as the children of One God, the law must always be dear, and happiness and peace will crown their efforts much more than even their most excited hope dared to expect in this state of existence!

O God, who lookest upon the contrite heart and humble spirit, receive our prayer, and guard us from all evil, for the sake of thy holy name! Amen.

Iyar 14th. } 5593.
May 3d. }

DISCOURSE XXVII.

MOTIVES OF GRATITUDE.

God of glory! to Thee we raise our eyes in hope of thy assistance; O save us now, from the evils to which our mortal career is subject; and let the light of thy countenance shine unto us, as Thou once didst unto our forefathers, when Thou didst appear unto them in clouds of brightness, and gavest them thy pure and holy law, for their guidance unto happiness. May it now be thy will to protect us in our captivity, and suffer not thy holy name to be profaned among the nations, and let not our enemies exult over our misfortunes, lest they should say in the pride of their hearts: "Where is their God?" But Thou, our God, wilt not suffer thy children to perish, although they have sinned to Thee, and Thou hast promised not to cast them off, nor to abhor them utterly, if even their transgressions should be manifold!—O have mercy upon the lonely sheep of Jacob, and let thy chastisement be only directed to soften their hearts, and to open their eyes to the evil of their way; so that, led by the paternal hand, which Thou hast ever extended over them, they may return unto Thee with repentance in their inward souls, and become worthy of thy forgiveness, and to be called again: "You are the people of the Lord." Amen.

Brethren!

Full often have we experienced the goodness of God. Already at the time when our ancestor Abraham was yet alone the star shining in the East, and sending forth the rays of piety into a benighted world, did we experience in him, our progenitor, the kindness which the Lord bestoweth on his servants.—You are all, no doubt, sufficiently familiar with the history of Abraham, to understand me when I say, that the approbation, which was so miraculously vouchsafed to him was, in all human probability, the cause that the worship of God was spread through the first preacher's means over a great portion of the primitive world. I do not wish to say, that any other method would have been impossible; for this would be circumscribing the power of the Almighty within the range of circumstances and casualties. But surely we may be permitted to believe that the grace given unto Abraham, and the evident favour this great apostle of righteousness enjoyed from on high, were, as far as we can judge, the best means of rivetting the attention of all mankind, and therefore the best adapted to impress upon them, how sweet it is to be a servant of the Being who had dealt so bountifully with his adorer.—Our nation having been thus early chosen as the peculiar treasure of God in the person of our first ancestor, we shall find no diminution of kindness if we descend to later periods.—Isaac selected as a sacrifice, to try the faith of his loving father, and rescued by the messenger of Mercy, was blessed by God, and promised the assistance which his father had never found failing him in his hour of need.—Jacob fled from before the wrath of his brother, and wandered into a distant land for the safety he found not in his parental home.—And was he forsaken? not in the least; for even whilst reposing upon the hard rock, he received comfort in a dream; and the promise of God, first made to Abraham and repeated to Isaac, was renewed to him, and he was assured, that in his person and the persons of his descendants should the prophecies be fulfilled.—Refreshed by these marks of Supreme favour, he served for many years, as we read in the book of Genesis; but even in servitude he saw sufficient grounds for thankfulness. A numerous offspring grew up around him, all like their father, untainted by idolatry, and undefiled by the abominations of the heathen!—At length Jacob returned, but not to enjoy the ease of life, which his great acquired riches might perhaps have induced him to look for as almost certain; for Providence had willed it, that he should go into Egypt, with his whole family, there to become the great nation, to whom the Lord would be God. Through the force of love Jacob was moved to wander thither in his old age; and he and his sons all departed from this life in the land of the children of Ham, fully impressed with the conviction, that the time would come when the Lord would lead the Israelites out of that land, into the inheritance which He had given unto their ancestor, when He made with him a covenant, and commanded him "to walk before him and be perfect."—The time rolled on; but the Egyptians had forgotten that they owed much gratitude to the Hebrew Joseph who, by his Heaven-bestowed prudence, had saved the land from the desolation of famine; they weened that Israel would be dangerous to the peace of the state; they imagined, as tyrants of more modern times also have imagined, that the Hebrews could have no community of interest with their fellow-citizens; they therefore oppressed them with heavy labour, and all manner of work in the field, for the purpose of diminishing their number! But the arm of the Lord interposed, and the more the Israelites were oppressed, the more they multiplied, and the more they spread out. When at length the time of the redemption approached, a prophet and messenger were chosen, to apprise Mitzraim's king that it was the will of the Eternal God, that he should dismiss the Israelites from his service. Pharaoh refused to obey; nay, he increased the burden of the enslaved, till even hope had fled from the heart of Jacob's children. But then it was that the fearful arm of the Lord was bared over the devoted land of Egypt, till at length the oppressor relented, and permitted, under the weight of awful visitations, to let the tribes of Yeshurun leave his land in triumph.—They thus went forth into the wilderness, devoted to God, as the newly married bride is devoted to her husband, and passed through the Red Sea, secure from the pursuing host of the Egyptians, who were sunk into the abyss, through which the Israelites had passed in safety.—And when they wanted bread, it was given them every morning; and when they asked for water, it flowed for them out of the flinty rock.—Soon after they were brought to the foot of Sinai, to receive the law, which was to instruct them in the way they were to go, and the statutes and commandments they were to observe.—Having in this manner the way of life revealed unto them, it was to have been hoped, that obedience would have followed the knowledge of right; but it was not so. Misguided by fear, and yielding to inherited prejudices, they sacrificed to an idol, and called it the god who had conducted them out of Egypt. The ungrateful nation now deserved to be exterminated; but the Merciful withheld his anger, forgave their sin and destroyed not, and poured not out all his wrath.—Again they sinned by murmuring against the promised land, and for a second time was the decree of destruction revoked; and by a wandering for forty years in the wilderness and the death of all those who had reached man's estate, when they left Egypt, the sin of ingratitude was expiated. They now entered the holy land, under the guidance of Moses's disciple Joshua: they drove out the former inhabitants, who had offended God by their wickedness, and dwelled in houses they had not built, drank out of cisterns which they had not hewn, and enjoyed all delightful products which they had not laid up themselves.—Here they might have lived a truly beloved people of God, an admiration to all nations, and a beacon-light to all inhabitants of the earth.—But they were led away by the free lives of the idolaters, the yoke of obedience to divine commands was too grievous for them to bear, and they stumbled upon the path of corruption.—But as they had been foretold, the punishment denounced speedily overtook them, and when oppressed by their enemies they soon discovered the difference between the effects of the service of Heaven and the result of subjection to men.—Whenever they repented, however, they were graciously received, and were, from time to time, saved through means of the judges, whom the Lord set up for them.—Thus elapsed many years, and the Israelites were upon the whole happy under the divine rule by which they were governed; till at length tired of the simplicity of their own pure government, they required a king to rule over them. —In this foolish demand they were gratified, and not alone this, but a wise and virtuous man was selected as their chief, who, whilst he sincerely adhered to his piety, was a blessing to the people. And when his conduct was such, as no longer to entitle him to the favour of God and confidence of men, he was told, that his kingdom should not endure, but should be given to a better man. This prince was David, of eight sons of Jesse the youngest, and at the time of his election the shepherd of his father's flock. To him, the poet, the warrior, the patriot, and the devoted servant of God, was the care of the Hebrew nation confided, and under him our kingdom rose to an indeed proud eminence.—It would be foreign to our rapid sketch to dwell minutely upon David's history and to expatiate upon every single act of his life as given to us in the Bible. Suffice it to say, that for the few sins committed under the peculiar circumstances in which he was placed, he displayed on every occasion so humble a resignation, so entire a reliance, and so contrite a hope for forgiveness from God, that we cannot help admiring that man, who among kings of his time the greatest, of conquerors the most renowned, and of poets of all ages the sweetest and most sublime, never forgot, on any one occasion, his accountability to a Supreme Being, although true to human nature, he occasionally transgressed, ay, severely transgressed; and yet even here his example, although not to be imitated in sinning, is a guide to all sinners, yea, the greatest, to return like him, to be like him received, under chastisement, again into favour, when their repentance and contrition are sincere and heartfelt.

If Israel had under David's rule obtained martial power, their moral glory was no less advanced by the splendid efforts of Solomon's reign. The temple dedicated to the all-pervading but unseen God, rose noiselessly before the admiring world, and the splendour of the arrangements of the service, the enchanting sublimity of the choral songs, the thrill of the unrivalled music, awakened the attention of even distant nations, who now acknowledged, that there was a God in Israel exalted above all power, and more sublime than all thought, and to whom it, of right, belonged, that all should adore him, and bring sacrifices to his footstool. Whoever now had the feelings of a man loving the community of which he was a part, whosever bosom glowed at the glory of his own native land, had at that period enough of cause for exultation, and abundant reason to thank God for the many blessings bestowed on his people.

Even after this period, when the splendour of our nation was eclipsed, when the kingdom, divided into two warring parties, became an easy prey for the invaders: we find, nevertheless, the kindness of our Lord displayed, who suffered not Israel and Judah to be led into captivity at the same moment, and permitted them not to be banished into one corner, lest they might be cut off through the malice of their enemies. So that what we at first might consider as a curse, that is to say, our entire dispersion over all the earth, has in truth been our salvation. For when was it ever in the power of any one nation to harm us all at the same time? where was ever that universal monarchy which comprised the whole Jewish nation in its boundaries? The disposition to exterminate us has, alas! but seldom been wanting, but, thanks to our provident Father, who supplied the balsam before the wound was yet inflicted, the execution has ever been beyond the power and reach of any one people, or of all nations combined.

After the banishment consequent on the sin of our ancestors had endured for seventy years, God visited them in their captivity, and they were permitted to rebuild the temple of the Most High in Jerusalem.—The love for idols had by their captivity in Babylon been entirely exterminated, and we, therefore, find no indications during the existence of the second temple, that this sin was ever general among the Jews; and thus then they flourished, protected by God, and preserved a distinct people, although now truly a handful of men among nations, since the ten tribes who had been banished before the destruction of the first house never returned, and even many of the Jews also remained behind in the lands of their captors. Many a time, indeed, did heathens pour their numerous armies over Judæa, forbade the religion of Heaven, and slaughtered the followers of a pure worship. But at no time during this whole period, and not even when the temple was again laid in ruins, and we were a second time scattered as the grains fall from a sieve, and were, so to say, encircled on all sides with envious evil-wishers, was it left in the power of men to deprive us of our religion, the solace of our captivity, the comfort amidst all our sufferings.

It pleased God, on the day* the recurrence of which we now celebrate, to raise us up to be unto Him as a people, more dearly beloved than all nations; and the intentions of God, the all-wise and all-good, cannot be frustrated by the feeble efforts of mortals.—And when on any one spot the burden of persecution was laid too heavy upon us, we always had a resting-place given us in another land; and if even it appeared that the sword was at any one time fully drawn to smite all, our adversaries were, in spite of themselves, induced to commiserate the fallen state of a people, made great by moral elevation, and upheld in olden times by the special favour of the Most High. This, brethren, is a brief view of the many mercies which it has been our lot to enjoy. It would be impossible to expatiate upon all the acts of grace, for they are too many for number, and even if we were to say all we know, we should yet be liable to the reproof of the wise Rabbi, who checked a man once with the question: "Hast thou finished all the praises of the Lord?" But enough has been said already to make it apparent to every one, that we, as Israelites, owe a peculiar debt of gratitude to our Creator.—If we now take a careful survey of all we have received, to see which is the greatest blessing: we shall come to the conclusion, that the promulgation of a revealed religion from Sinai was the chief good that has been bestowed on us. For what good would the covenant with Abraham have done, if his descendants had not become more enlightened in the knowledge of God, than the other nations?—To what end would the redemption from Egypt and the entrance into Palestine have tended, but to drive out one pagan people to make room for another, equally corrupt and uninformed?—What would have all temporary assistance under affliction, and victories over enemies availed, if nothing but the martial shout of triumph or the acquisition of a new territory had resulted therefrom? —And what at last could have preserved our national existence, but the law of God?—Yes, brethren, this alone it is which made the covenant with Abraham effectual; this made the exodus from Egypt not merely an act of grace to one people, but to all nations of the world, although in consequence thereof, one nation of barbarous idolaters, given to the most revolting acts of cruelty in their pretended worship, had to be driven out from a land, the soil of which they had polluted by their enormities.—Again, if assistance against enemies and triumph over invaders were granted, they were only another shield to preserve the pure worship free from admixture of heathen rites.—And when at length we were banished from off the goodly land which the Lord had given us, we owed, and still owe, our preservation to the doctrines of the faith, the observance of which compel us to be unlike other families, and render us a separate and distinct people.—We, therefore, find that all the prophets spoke of the law, not as a burden imposed, but as a benefit granted, and we are constantly admonished to preserve it inviolate and holy.—And thus spoke

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* The Pentecost, the sixth of Sivan.

Malachi at the conclusion of his prophecy, and which also closes the books of the prophets:

זכרו תורת משה עבדי אשר צויתי אותו בחרב על
כל ישראל חקים ומשפטים : מלאכי ג׳ כב׳ :

"Remember the law of Moses my servant, in which I have commanded him on Horeb statutes and judgments for all Israel." Malachi, iii. 22.

This law of Moses is indeed fit to be the law-book of an enlightened and virtuous people. It enjoins love for One great Creator and Preserver of all things; it commands good-will and peace towards all our fellow-beings, and its object is to regulate the inclinations and passions of man, so that the consequence of our actions may be a holy and righteous life.—But, brethren, let each of us ask himself: "Have I so acted, as the law demands? Do I love my Creator? Am I at peace and on terms of good-will with all men? Have I subjected my wishes, my thoughts, my endeavours, and my passions to the wholesome restraint of the divine code?" Wo! wo! that we can give answers to these questions so little satisfactory to our immortal souls! The law says, "I am the Lord thy God!" and again, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might."—Farther, "After the Lord your God you shall walk, and Him you shall fear; and his commandments ye shall keep, and to his voice ye shall hearken, and Him ye shall serve, and to Him ye shall adhere." But we have set ourselves above our God! when He commands us to love Him, we grumble at his dispensations; we think ourselves wronged by the events which befal us, as though the

Judge of all the earth ever exercised judgment without a sufficient cause!—We are told, that it is God's pleasure that we should keep the Sabbath as a sign between Him and us for ever; but we cannot rest; our business compels us, so we say, to regard the gain of a few pieces of silver more than the pleasure of our Father! Yes, a trifling gain, a gain which is often snatched from us before it is yet hoarded, we set up as an object more desirable than the favour and grace of God, which are everlasting!—And the law itself, the whole of which is alike the emanation of the same Supreme Wisdom, we treat as though it were a human invention; we reject this as unreasonable, and that as obsolete; this could only have been intended for the wilderness of Arabia, and that suits not ourselves under this or that circumstance. This is the way many of us endeavour to lighten the law for themselves, and this is, alas! the cause of all the division which so unhappily withholds many from coming to this house to worship continually with the congregation of the faithful. And if even some men *do* put faith in the whole law, they are often withheld from associating with their brethren, through offended pride. Any one receiving an offence from those connected with the Synagogue, thinks himself entitled to wreak his vengeance upon the house of God, as though his outraged feelings (even granting that he has just cause to be offended) could authorize him to break the bonds which unite him to the holy community.—Brethren, this state of things is not good! we have become a scandal to many for the small regard we bear for the law! it is said, that infidelity is making rapid progress among us! it is asserted, that the violation of the Sabbath is regarded as but a trifling offence with us! some say, that the Jews have ceased to view forbidden food with horror; and those who see the seats of our Synagogues so often unoccupied, maintain that we have lost all religious feelings! In truth, I cannot blame any stranger, who, viewing things from appearances only, adjudges the modern Jews to be no longer a pious people. I know full well, that it is not from unbelief, but from too great a regard for personal convenience and worldly gain, that most of us transgress; but the effects are the same, whether we sin from unbelief, or from any other cause. Let us, therefore, remove the stigma; it is very easy of attainment, if we but make a serious and united effort. They who now neglect the Sabbath, may, if they but will, yield obedience to the precept, which says: "Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy."—They who have separated themselves from the Synagogue can easily return, and pay their devotions in the house dedicated to Israel's Preserver!—They who have defiled themselves by unlawful living, may, O how easily! purify their way (although the past cannot be recalled), and do as their pious fathers have done before them.—They who have wronged their fellow-men, let them make restitution to those they have injured, and make thus their peace with God and men!—Let the hater of his species accustom his heart to find pleasure in the precept: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour like thyself," and he will find satisfaction arising to him from yielding the unjust hatred which had rendered his former existence unhappy!—And let him, who has by the indulgence of his passions offended his Maker, curb the impetuosity of his conduct, and gradually return with sure and unwavering steps to the righteous path from which he has perhaps thoughtlessly, or even wickedly strayed.—If in this manner we all "remember the law of Moses the servant of God," how can we fail to become again a pious nation, a holy people, and a kingdom of priests? If the next anniversary of the promulgation of the law should find many wanderers from the way of virtue again united to the communion of the adherents to our Father in heaven; if we should then be made glad by seeing the service of our pure religion more regarded and better and more numerously attended than we have found it hitherto: how exultingly shall we point to the agreeable result, and tell to others how sweetly yet speaketh, even at this distant day, the holy law to the soul of every Israelite! To effect this pious object rests entirely with all and each of us; let each, therefore, contribute his share towards this reformation, and let no one be deterred from beginning, because one or another has not yet set the example. If we accordingly do this to the best of our ability, we may rest assured, that upon all occasions, when assembled in this house, we shall be blessed, as we are promised in the law: "In every place, where I will permit thee to mention my name, will I come and bless thee."

O bless us, Father of mercy! and guide our wavering steps through the dangers of life, and receive us at its close into thy paternal bosom, there to give us rest and joy, till Thou callest again the dead to everlasting and happy life. Amen.

Sivan 5th. } 5593.
May 23d. }

DISCOURSE XXVIII.

THE SIN OF INSINCERITY.

Father of mercy! open thy ears to our prayers, and be gracious to us.—Not for the sake of our goodness, not because of our own righteousness do we ask thy aid; for well we know, that we have sinned—well do we know, that our hands are soiled with deeds of iniquity, and that our hearts are impure, because of the thoughts of deceit and wickedness which we have cherished. But Thou, O gracious Sovereign of all, wilt not judge us according to the strict rules of unpardoning justice, but wilt ever temper the severity of decision with the clemency of paternal favour; and mayest Thou, thus judging, call us unto thy salvation, and receive our service in favour, although we humble mortals do but little of the good, which thy grace may have permitted us to accomplish. May this be thy will, now and for ever! Amen.

Brethren!

We often are presumptuous enough to complain of the dispensations of Heaven; we find fault with our fate, because we imagine, that we have not received what we deem our just share of the amount of happiness, which we see distributed around us. We accuse the Deity, but O how wickedly! of injustice to our great personal merits, and often compare, foolishly vaunting, our own moral goodness, mental elevation, and social importance, with the same qualities in others, and then in the bitterness of our hearts we ask: "Why are we not as bountifully dealt with as our neighbours?"—Apart now from the consideration, that it is unbecoming for the creature to rise up in judgment against his Creator, there is generally in all the like complaints, whether they are uttered or merely haunting the imagination of the discontented, a great and woful want of self-knowledge at the bottom of this discontent.—We only look to the fact, that others, whom we style happy, are bad, at least we think so; and therefore, by contrast, we come to the conclusion that we good and virtuous ones should be more happy still.—But before we should suffer any complaint to ripen in our thoughts, we ought to inquire: "Are we what we should be? Is our virtue of that sincere, disinterested caste, that it will withstand temptation? Is our devotion or our piety the effect of habit and imitation, or of conviction and love—pure love of God? Has hypocrisy no part in producing outward religion in which the heart has no share?"—And if we often, I may add daily, institute this investigation, it is to be feared, that but little unmixed virtue would be found seated in our souls. We would often find, that charity is exercised for the sake of ostentation; benevolence to one, accompanied by violence, fraud and oppression towards another; continence exhibited before the public gaze, the better to lull the vigilance of men to secret debauchery; and outward religion, frequent attendance at the house of God, the visiting of the sick, and even risking of life to save that of others, frequently not unaccompanied by overreaching the defenceless and practising wickedness upon the unwary.—Do I overdraw scenes of iniquity? Or rather is this not a true exposition of feelings, which lie, alas! but too frequently at the bottom of human goodness? And if this is the case, and daily experience confirms it, we may no longer wonder, why the Almighty in his mercy so often lets chastisement fall upon those who practise righteousness, that they may be continually recalled to investigate where the evil is for which they suffer. Already at the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham asked of God: "Shall the judge of all the earth not do justice?" But, O how true is it, that nothing but justice springs from the Source of wisdom and righteousness; it is sinful man alone, who draws upon himself the consequence of sin—the punishment indissolubly connected with transgression. Ay, the righteous sins often, oftener indeed, than human pride would flatter itself; often even, as said, while seemingly engaged in pious deeds; and it is, therefore, that the punishment, be it light or heavy, be it mental or bodily, follows the transgression as sure as the flash precedes the sound of the awful discharge of Heaven's thunder. Now we blame our heavenly Father for the punishment meted out to us; but it is we who have applied the poisoned chalice to our own lips, we quaff the fatal draught, and when we writhe under the distressing agony of a terrible dissolution, we pronounce malediction upon the vender of the drug, when we alone are to blame, for having mixed the cup, and wilfully and knowingly exhausted its contents.—To follow up the simile, the righteous may say: "I will enter into the abode of vice, will partially partake of its practice, that thereby I may restore the blunted delight my soul now takes in the exercise of unmixed good!" Let him be warned; the deadly poison of vice is like the destructive acid, the inward contact with which destroys animal life instantaneously.—And let no one trifle with sinful practices, although they be but trifling; they will overwhelm the finer feelings of his nature, as it were, with the suddenness of a volcanic shower, and turn him, whither he will, its terrific flight will overtake him, till he sinks exhausted and despairing into the gaping jaws of death! Let no man then think, that since to err is human, he may safely render himself a compound of vice and virtue, of folly and wisdom. Woful error! unmixed exaltation above all earthly passions should be the aim, the constant study of life, and not until this eminence is attained, can we cease to be vigilant over ourselves. And when is this point gained? never, in our existence; and it is well that it is so; we must ever toil upwards, undismayed by intervening obstacles, undisturbed by the howling of the storm, which the world, the passions, the cares of life may stir up within us! But he who vainly endeavours to hold the balance between goodness and sin will fail, and become the ungodly wanderer, which he so sedulously avoided to be, by bestowing, what he imagined, an equal share upon both ways of life.

These considerations will be better understood, when we refer to the portion of the prophet Isaiah which has been read to-day.—After speaking of the ingratitude and thoughtlessness of the Israelites in neglecting to serve God with truth and sincerity, he compares himself and Israelites to Sodom and Gomorrah, on account of the great destruction which he foresaw; and then continues:

שמעו דבר ה׳ קציני סדם האזינו תורת אלהינו
עם עמרה: למה לי רב זבחיכם יאמר ה׳ שבעתי
עלות אילים וחלב מריאים ודם פרים וכבשים ועתודים
לא חפצתי: כי תבאו לראות פני מי בקש זאת מידכם
רמס חצרי: לא תוסיפו הביא מנחת שוא קטרת
תועבה היא לי חדש ושבת קרא מקרא לא אוכל
און ועצרה: ישע׳ א׳ י׳־יג׳:

"Hear then the word of the Lord, chiefs of Sodom! listen to the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah! To what serveth me the multitude of your sacrifices, saith the Lord, I am sated with the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fatted cattle, and the blood of steers, and sheep and rams, I desire not. When you come to be seen before me—who asketh this of your hands, to tread down my courts?—Bring no longer the offering of deceit, it is incense of abomination to me—not new-moon-days and Sabbaths, assemblies at festivals—I cannot bear misdeeds with festive gathering." Isaiah i. 10–13.

"I cannot bear misdeeds with festive gathering," says our God, and let it be our endeavour to have this solemn lesson constantly before us, and derive the benefit from it, which we should ever obtain from the wisdom emanating from the Creator's own words.—Isaiah had been sent to denounce to the Israelites their sinful practices, to tell them that the proud citadel of Zion should be left as desolate as the neglected hut in a vineyard, and that, but for the grace of God, the destruction should be as total as the subversion of the cities of the plain. Perhaps they may have pointed to the long row of oxen, of rams, and sheep led to the altar to be sacrificed, as an agreeable savour to the Lord, to the pomp with which the new-moon-days, the Sabbaths, and festivals, were celebrated, to the sweet incense which daily was burnt upon the golden altar before the holy of holies. —And to this remonstrance, why punishment should not come down upon the sinning people, the prophet replies: "Hear then the word of the Lord, chiefs of Sodom, listen to the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah!" We read in the book of Genesis of the evil deeds, the unblushing licentiousness exhibited in these towns, and candour must compel us to add, that depravity but little inferior, and brought about by an attachment to idolatry and mixing with heathen nations, had taken deep root in the times of the prophets, as we must gather from their touching admonitions to an unwillingly listening people. "Chiefs of Sodom, people of Gomorrah," says the prophet, "you, who practise, both high and low, deeds discountenanced by the law of our God, and follow institutions forbidden by the word of the Lord, you will speak of sacrifices, of incense, of burning fat, of smoking altars? You point to the crowded courts of the holy temple, to the number of pilgrims that grace Jerusalem at festive seasons, and then imagine, that evil cannot come?—But you are mistaken, God no longer desires you to tread down his courts; the presence of sinners, when coming unreformed, for the sake of being seen of men, is not pleasant, and He abhors festive celebration, if wickedness and sin accompany it."—And he continues: "Your new-moon-days, and your festivals, my soul doth hate, they have become a burden upon me, I am tired of bearing them. And when you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; and if even you pray ever so much, I hear not, your hands are full of blood."—The consequences of sinning are here strongly exemplified. We are commanded to observe Sabbaths, the festivals, to assemble on those days in the city chosen as the peculiar seat of God's majesty; He had promised, that He would come and bless us, whenever we obeyed his will in this respect, so far even as to preserve our land from the inroads of enemies, when all should be gone on their periodical pilgrimages; but when our ancestors had sinned, their very outward acts of piety were considered, not as a mitigation, but as an aggravating of their offence; the celebrations of the festivals had become, as it were, a burden too heavy to be borne by the Sustainer of all; and even the prayers of the congregation He would no more hear, if prayers were ever so much multiplied, if all were to appear with hands outstretched to heaven, because their hands were filled with blood.—Now, if we look at what Moses said in the fourth chapter, seventh verse of Deuteronomy: "For where is there a nation, ever so great, to whom the gods are as nigh as our God, whenever we call upon Him?" we shall at one view have before us the difference between serving God in sincerity, and assuming piety as a cloak for wickedness. In the one place, we need but breathe a wish, and our wish is fulfilled, as the prophet tells us in another passage; and when we transgress, no multiplicity of prostrations, no accumulation of words, no show of outspread hands will avail; for the eyes of God, as it were, are turned with horror from the sight of so much hypocrisy, and his ears are closed against the discordant sound of apparent devotion, mixed up with the contamination of vice.

After having in this manner pourtrayed the abhorrence felt for wickedness and deceit, the prophet announces what would be pleasing to God, and says: "Wash you, cleanse yourselves, remove the evil of your deeds,—cease to do evil.—Learn to do good, seek justice, restore the robbed property, see justice done to the orphan, attend to the suit of the widow!"—The first step in reformation must be the purification of the heart, that is to say, we must endeavour to find out the sources of our hypocrisy and correct our thoughts, so as not to produce again actions of the kind which our Lord abominates.—This first step taken, active purification should follow: First, to learn what is right; so that if a man has acted wrongly from ignorance, he may not be misled again by the like cause.—Then he should endeavour to dispense justice, restore what has been unlawfully obtained, and prevent oppression from descending through the practices of others upon the heads of the helpless ones. For it is unfortunately but too true, that whenever any one becomes reduced, people are very apt to begin to think ill of him, and for fear that his downward course should not be rapid enough, his former friends perhaps even assist in lending their aid to break from under his feet the little resting-place he may have found, to precipitate him the faster into the gulf of ruin; and, strange as it may seem, the lone widow and fatherless wanderer, as also the friendless stranger, are almost daily the victims of the rapacious and designing. The prophet, therefore, designates the orphan and widow as the chief objects of the care of the sinner, who wishes to obtain the favour of God; he should, namely, having hitherto practised outward piety for the sake of appearance only, now oppose the wrong intended towards the defenceless, though in this pursuit he should expose himself to the ridicule and even obloquy of a thoughtless world.—Conduct so contrary to hypocrisy and time-serving persevered in, will next tend to obtain the forgiveness of sins; as the Lord says: "If your sins be like scarlet, they shall be white as the snow, and if they be red as crimson, they shall become like wool." This is the image the messenger of Heaven used to express the change which repentance, inward and outward, will invariably produce in man; the glare of the scarlet is to vanish, and the pure whiteness of snow shall take its place; and truly when the heart has undergone a change from wickedness and corruption to virtue and entire devotion to religion, it is not what it was, nay, it bears not even the least resemblance to its former self, but it is, as though a heart of stone had been removed, and one of flesh substituted in its place;—the want of hope is supplied by hope in the Lord, and the absence of peace is superseded by the all-healing grace of God.

Thus were the effects of sin and the results of piety laid by Isaiah before Israel. He told them farther, that doing good would certainly bring the blessing promised, but that the sword should destroy them, if they refused obedience.—Alas! however, their ears were closed against hearing, and their hearts against understanding, and they continued their course of iniquity, undismayed by the reproof and instructions of those sent to admonish them. And the sword was drawn, and the fire was kindled; and our virgins, our sages, our tender children, and our strong men were slaughtered, and our palaces were burnt, and our temple devoured *twice* by the consuming flame. And those whom the sword had spared, were led into captivity, and here we linger distant from all the scenes of our early institutions, scattered and dispersed over all the earth! And those few, who have returned to the land of Palestine, to lay their bones near the graves of the fathers of our people, live degraded, in fear of enemies and in poverty, in the home of the former free and brave Hebrew nation! Ay, so miserable is their state, that to this distant land, even, they send their accredited men to ask for aid, to help them to buy bread for their helpless children, and to rescue from the grasp of the cruel creditor the bodies of the ancients and sages among them!

All this has come over us, because we refused to mould our actions by the ordinances of the law, because we preferred worldly pleasures to the favour of the Everlasting One.—We, therefore, have yet to mourn every year, at this time, the destruction of all that was sacred in Jerusalem, the slaughter of the priests, and the burning of the temple.—And yet, the mournful ninth of Ab, the day on which all these evils occurred, scarcely calls up in the bosoms of many of us any emotion of national grief;—since many think it not necessary to mourn for all that has been lost, and for the awful change which has come over our people! Nay more, the law of God, the infraction of which has been so terribly visited, the truth of which has been so awfully proven, is not even now responded to by our hearts; we add to this day, yea, more than formerly, wickedness to transgression, and brave the thunders of God, as though they would not be sent, and smite at length our guilty heads into the dust! And truly said Isaiah: "Wo! sinning people, nation loaded with wickedness, seed of evil-doers, destroying children!—they have forsaken the Lord, incensed the Holy One of Israel, and departed back from the righteous path!"—Indeed, it is useless to hide the truth from ourselves, that much private and public sin exists among us, and that the denunciations of the ancient prophet are as yet applicable to our own days.—But this state of things must be altered, this unrighteousness must cease; for the day will come, when God will revenge himself on his opponents, and take vengeance of his enemies, at the time when He consigneth to condign punishment those who have transgressed his law.—Then also, will the Lord let his hand pass over us, and like the crucible smelt out our dross and remove all our alloy; and, adds the prophet: "And I will reappoint thy judges as formerly, and thy councillors as in old times, and after this thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the trusty town. Zion shall be redeemed through justice, and those who return unto her through righteousness."

O may it be thy will, Father of mercy! to fulfil speedily the promises Thou didst make through thy prophets, and raise up again thy altars, where offerings of righteousness, and incense of purity shall be offered to Thee for everlasting. Amen.

Ab 3d. } 5593.
July 19th. }

NOTE.—During the summer of '93 (1833) arrived here an accredited messenger from Jerusalem, by name Rabbi Enoch Zundell. His presence gave rise to the allusion to the state of suffering Israelites in Palestine, in whose behalf he had been sent.

END OF VOLUME FIRST.

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